



THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

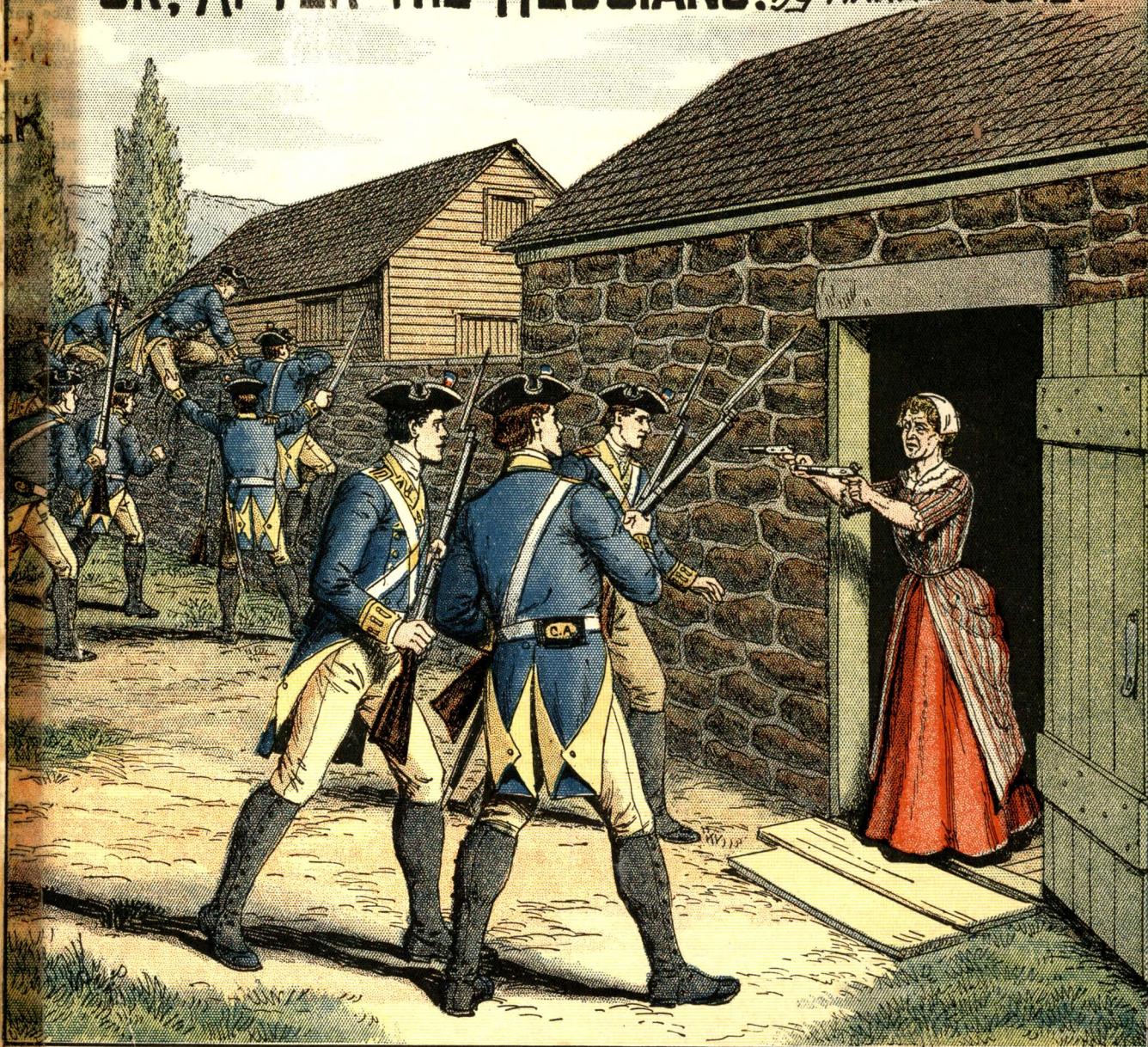
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NEW YORK, MAY 20, 1904.

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THE LIBERTY BOYS ~ • AND • ~ FLORA McDONALD; OR, AFTER THE HESSIANS. *By HARRY MOORE.*



"Back!" cried Flora McDonald, leveling her pistols; "you can't come through here!" "Over the fence with you, boys," cried Dick; "we'll catch the rascals yet!" The youths obeyed the command with alacrity.

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THE LIBERTY BOYS AND FLORA McDONALD

OR,

AFTER THE HESSIANS.

By **HARRY MOORE.**

CHAPTER I.

DOWN SOUTH.

It was the month of May, of the year 1780.

The War of the Revolution had been raging more than four years.

It had been about an even thing between the patriots and the British.

The British had been successful in capturing Forts Washington and Lee, but to offset this the patriots had captured Burgoyne and his army at Saratoga, thus winning in the extreme northern section.

Now, however, the British had gone down into South Carolina and had overpowered the patriots there, thus capturing the entire State.

General Clinton, the British commander-in-chief, had issued a proclamation promising that all who would take the oath of allegiance to the king should be pardoned for any past offenses against the crown.

Others gave their parole that they would not take up arms against the king during the continuance of the war.

The circular called upon all loyal men to get up loyalist militia, with which to suppress any future attempts at uprising or rebellion.

Having done this, General Clinton loaded all his troops—with the exception of 5,000—on transports, and set sail for New York, leaving General Cornwallis in command in the South.

It was Clinton's belief that Cornwallis, with this number of men, could easily retain control of the state, and even extend operations.

It was just at this time that the Liberty Boys of '76

made their appearance in the Cape Fear River region of North Carolina.

The Liberty Boys were a company, one hundred in number, who were strong patriots and wonderful fighters as well.

They had done splendid work for the patriot cause during the four years they had been in the army.

They were a company of cavalry, and consequently, being in a position to get over a large scope of country, they were often sent on long trips to assist the patriot cause where the need of assistance existed.

It was so in this instance.

General Washington knew that the British were hard at work in South Carolina, and he had sent the youths down into that region, with instructions to do all they could for the cause of liberty.

They had reached a creek that emptied into the Cape Fear River on the evening of which we write and had gone into camp.

They were still in North Carolina, but expected to be in South Carolina very soon.

The youths had just gone into camp, when the sentinel on the south side of the encampment challenged a stranger who suddenly put in an appearance.

This stranger was tall and gaunt, and carried a long rifle. He looked as though he were a hunter or trapper, or both. He was dressed in blue homespun, and on his head was a squirrel-skin cap.

"Who are you?" the sentinel asked, holding the stranger at bay with leveled musket.

"My name is Lige Shull," was the reply.

"What do you want here?"

"I want to see ther boss uv yer crowd."

The sentinel hesitated, and then lowered his musket and said:

"All right; go right into the encampment."

"Who shall I ask fur, then?"

"Ask for Dick Slater."

"All right."

The stranger walked into the encampment and stepped up to a group of youths and said:

"Evenin'; I wanten see Dick Slater."

"I am Dick Slater," said one of the youths, turning and facing the stranger.

He was a handsome young fellow, seemingly about twenty years of age. He was bronzed by exposure to a deep brown hue, but was evidently healthy and hearty.

This youth was the captain of the Liberty Boys, and he was one who had a great deal of good work for the patriot cause.

He had done lots of scout and spywork, and was one whom the commander-in-chief had every confidence in.

"So ye're ther head wun heer, air ye?" the stranger asked.

"I am; what can I do for you?"

The tall stranger grinned.

"Mebby I kin do sumthin' fur ye," he said.

The youth looked surprised.

"Perhaps so," he said; "if you can, I shall be glad to have you do so."

"All right; ye're patriots, hain't ye?"

The youth eyed the man searchingly.

"What are you?" he asked; "are you a patriot?"

"Ye bet I am!"

This was said so earnestly that Dick could not doubt that the man was speaking the truth.

"I am glad to hear you say that," he said; "what is your name?"

"Lige Shull."

"You live in this part of the country?"

"Yes; I've lived heer all my live, purty near."

"Then you ought to knew the country pretty thoroughly."

"I do."

"I am glad to know you, Mr. Shull; what can I do for you, or what can you do for me?"

"I kin give ye some news, p'raps."

"About what?"

"Erbout ther state uv affa'rs in these parts."

"You mean as regards the British army of the South?"

"Yes; did ye know thet ther British hev captered ther hull State uv South Caroliny?"

The youth shook his head.

"No, I didn't know it," he said.

"Waal, et's so; ther British hev got ever'thin', an' ef ye wuz thinkin' uv goin' on down inter South Caroliny ye had better change yer minds."

"Jove, that is bad news, Dick!" said Bob Estabrook, a bright, handsome youth of about Dick's age.

"That's so, Bob."

"And won't we go on down into South Carolina?"

"Not right away, at any rate."

"Ye hedn't better," said Lige Shull; "et won't be safe fur er leetle gang like youn't ter go down thar."

"What are the redcoats doing?" asked Dick.

"They're doin' jes' ez they pleeze; they air makin' ever' buddy take ther oath uv alleegiance, an' they air makin' others git up milishy. Ther woods is full uv redcoats an' Tories, I tell ye!"

"Then I think we had better stay on this side of the river," said Dick.

"Oh, let's don't stay here, Dick," said Bob; "let's go over and have some fun with the redcoats, Tories and Hessians."

"We would probably have more fun than we would want."

"Thet's whut ye would," said Shull.

"Well, we can stay over here and make flying trips across the line," said Bob.

The hunter grinned and looked at Bob.

"I guess ye like ter fight," he said.

"Well, I like to have enough to do so that I won't get lazy and not want to stir around at all," was the reply.

"I think thet et's likely ye'll hev ernuff ter do, even ef ye stay on this side uv ther river."

"You think so?" asked Dick.

"Yes, I do."

"Well, then we will stay here, at least for the present."

"Ye'll want er better place nor this fur er camp, won't ye?"

"Yes; do you know of a good place?"

"Thet's whut I do."

"Will you guide us to it?"

"Uv course; I'll do thet ther furst thing in ther mornin'."

"Very well."

The hunter remained in the encampment all night, and next morning he led the way to a high bluff which overlooked the Cape Fear River, and indeed the whole country for miles in every direction.

There was timber on the top of the bluff, and there was also plenty of grass growing in the timber for the horses to graze on.

There was a path leading down to the river; the path had been made evidently by wild animals that went back and forth to get water to drink.

"Thar's er big cavern in ther face uv ther bluff, not fur down, whar ye c'u'd go an' hol' an army at bay," said Lige Shull. "But I don't think enny uv ther redcoats, Hessians er Tories'll come up heer ter look fur enemies."

"I hope not," said Dick.

"Oh, say, you don't want us to have any fun at all, Dick!" grumbled Bob.

"Thot's roight, Bhob, me bye," said Patsy Brannigan.

"Yah, dot is der trut', py shimmanetty," from Carl Gookenspieler.

"Shure an' it's no sthoma'ch at all thot yez hav' fur inn'y

such fun, Cookyspiller," said Patsy, scornfully; "yez would radther shtay in dhe camp an' take t'ings aisy, begorra."

"Und vat do you know aboudid dot, Batsy Prannigan?" retorted Carl; "I vos lige vun so muchness as vat you lige him, und dot is so."

"Thot may be dhe thruth, but Oi doubt it, so Oi do, begorra."

"You will have all the fun you want, no doubt," said Dick; "we will make excursions over into the enemy's country, and there will be plenty of lively work."

"Thet's whut thar will be, Cap'n Slater," said Lige Shull.

The youths went to work to make themselves comfortable.

They thought it likely that they would be here some time, and so they arranged things so they would have things handy and convenient.

"The only thing I don't like about this place is having to carry water up the hill," said Dick.

"Oh, thet won't be sech er hard job when ye git used ter et," said Lige.

"And it is better to be inconvenienced in that way and have a position that is almost unassailable than to have a poor position and everything handy," said Mark Morrison.

"Yes, that is true," agreed Dick; "and I suppose that there is a way we can go with the horses to lead them down to let them drink?"

"Oh, yes; thar's er path down thet way," pointing; "et's funder, but hain't so steep."

"Oh, I guess that this will be a good place fur us to make our encampment," said Dick.

"Yes, this will be all right, Dick—if you will let us go over into the enemy's country whenever we want to," said Bob.

CHAPTER II.

FLORA McDONALD.

"Say, Lige?"

"What, Cap'n Slater?"

"How are we to get across the river when we wish to go over into the enemy's country?"

"Thar is er good boat down thar."

"Oh, is there?"

"Yes."

"How big a boat is it?"

"Oh, et'll kerry er duzzen at er time."

"That is all right, then; it won't take long to get us all across."

"No."

"Let's go over this afternoon, Dick." This last was from Bob Estabrook.

"All right."

This suited the Liberty Boys first rate.

They had not done anything, save ride on horseback—in making the long trip from the North—for two weeks, and they wanted to get into action.

They would have been willing to engage in battle with four or five times their number, just for the sake of getting to fight and get their blood to circulating freely again.

They hastened to cook their dinners and eat, after which they made preparations for the trip across into the enemy's country.

Six of the youths remained on guard at the encampment and the others went down the path to the river.

Here, in under some bushes, was the hunter's boat.

The youths leaped in till the boat would hold no more, and then they rowed across to the farther shore and disembarked.

Lige Shull brought the boat back to the north shore, and another lot of Liberty Boys got in and were ferried across.

This was repeated till all were over, and then the boat was concealed under some bushes and the youths set out through the timber.

The hunter led the way, for he was familiar with the lay of the land, and, too, he knew where they were likely to encounter redcoats and Hessians.

The youths kept a sharp lookout, for they did not know but what they might run upon the enemy at any moment.

Presently they came to the top of a high ridge, and right ahead of them, halfway down the slope, was an encampment of Hessian soldiers.

The Liberty Boys paused and took a survey of the encampment.

They sized it up as having about three hundred men in it.

This was pretty big odds, but they did not mind it.

As Bob often said, the bigger the odds the more fun they would have.

"Shall we make an attack?" asked Dick.

"Yes, yes!" said Bob; "we don't want to let this chance slip by."

"All right; just as you boys say; but we must be ready to retreat at a moment's notice."

"You think we are likely to be in the position of the boy who poked the hornet's nest with a stick, Dick?" with a smile.

"Well, it is possible that it may turn out that way."

Then he told the youths to get ready for the attack.

"We will slip down till we are in musket-shot distance of the enemy," he explained; "then we will take careful aim and give them a volley. After that we will act as circumstances direct."

"After that we will charge right down through the ranks of the enemy," said Bob Estabrook.

But Dick shook his head.

"We don't want to be too rash," he said; "you must remember that we are a long ways from home, and that there are not many patriot troops in this part of the country to help us out in case we get into trouble."

"Oh, we won't need any help."

That was Bob up and down; he never thought that the Liberty Boys needed help.

They advanced slowly and cautiously.

They were experts at this kind of work.

They were equal to Indians, in fact.

They advanced till they were within musket-shot distance of the enemy and then paused.

They leveled their muskets and took careful aim.

When the youths had had time to get good aim Dick gave the word to fire.

The youths obeyed the command.

Crash! Roar!

The volley rang out loudly.

Good execution was done; at least thirty of the Hessians went down, dead and wounded.

Groans went up from the wounded and yells of rage were given utterance to by the others.

They had been taken completely by surprise, but the Hessians were stubborn fighters, and they at once seized their muskets and fired a volley up in the direction the Liberty Boys' volley had come from.

Three of the youths were wounded.

Following the musket-volley by the Hessians, their commander ordered them to charge up at the enemy.

They obeyed and came running up the slope.

"Give them a couple of pistol-volleys and then retreat," ordered Dick.

The youths obeyed.

They fired two volleys from their pistols and then turned and retreated up the slope to the top of the ridge.

The Hessians were still coming in pursuit, and so the youths continued on down the slope.

They were out of range before the Hessians got to the top of the ridge, and so had no difficulty in getting clear away.

They continued onward till they were safe from pursuit and then they came to a stop.

"We came out all right," said Bob; "I tell you, we are hard to beat when we get to work in good shape."

"Yah, dot is der trut'," said Carl Gookenspieler; "ve are der poys vat are hart do peat."

"Yez are afther bein' roight abhout thot, Dootchy," said Patsy Brannigan.

"Yes, for once you have both told the truth," said Ben Spurlock.

Then the question came up regarding what should be done next.

"Shall we go back to our encampment?" asked Dick.

"Oh, let's not go back yet, Dick," said Bob. "We have been over here only an hour or so. Let's not go back till night."

None of the youths seemed eager to go back, and so it was decided that they would reconnoiter some more.

They spent most of the afternoon in moving about looking for redcoats and Hessians, but did not find another party.

Along toward evening they made their way back toward the river.

When they got there they found the boat in place and proceeded to cross to the northern shore.

An hour later they were back in their encampment on the top of the bluff.

It was not yet late, so Dick decided to go out on a scouting expedition.

He went alone and moved along at a fair pace.

His object, as much as anything, was to get acquainted with the lay of the land, so that he would not have to depend upon a guide when he wanted to go anywhere with the Liberty Boys.

He had gone about two miles, when he came upon a little settlement.

It consisted of five houses, and was in a little valley lying along a small stream which evidently emptied into the Cape Fear River at no great distance away.

Four of the five houses were half a mile away, up the valley, the other being within a stone's throw of Dick.

The house that was nearest to Dick was a good-sized one, and, to judge by the number of outhouses, the owner was pretty well-to-do.

While Dick was standing there looking at the scene in front of him he saw a man wearing the uniform of a British captain emerge from the timber and advance to the house.

He opened the door without stopping to knock and entered.

"He seems to be quite at home there," thought Dick.

His curiosity was aroused, and he made up his mind that he would learn who the officer was, if possible; he even thought of capturing him.

He advanced to the house and made his way around to the rear.

His idea was that he might see a servant and find out who lived in the house.

He was just about to knock on the door, when it suddenly opened, and Dick found himself confronted by the officer he had seen enter the house not long before.

The Liberty Boy had taken the precaution of donning a rough suit of citizen's clothing, so was not particularly afraid of being suspected of being a patriot.

The officer eyed Dick a few moments, and then said:

"Good-evening, sir."

"Good-evening," replied Dick.

"What can I do for you?" the captain asked.

"I was going to ask what place this is," was the reply.

"This is called Cross Creek Settlement."

The Liberty Boy glanced toward the west. The sun was just disappearing below the treetops.

"I would like to stay here to supper, and all night, if agreeable," he said.

The captain hesitated.

He eyed Dick rather closely.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Henry Tate," replied Dick.

"You do not live in this part of the country." He made this as a decided statement.

"No; I am from over near the coast. I am on my way down into South Carolina."

"You are traveling afoot?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is slow work, isn't it?"

"Pretty slow; but I am in no hurry."

"Which side do you favor?"

"Oh, I am loyal to the king."

"That is good. Why don't you join the British army or the loyalist militia?"

"I have been thinking of doing so."

"Is that really the truth?"

"Yes, sir."

The Liberty Boy seemed to be so candid and frank about the matter that the officer was impressed with the belief that he was speaking the truth.

"You may stay to supper and over night if you like, Mr. Tate," he said. "Come in."

The youth entered and the officer led the way to a good-sized sitting-room near the front of the building.

"My name is McDonald," he said; "and I am a captain of loyal militia."

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Captain McDonald," said Dick.

They sat down and talked awhile, and then a woman of perhaps forty years entered the room.

The captain and Dick both rose to their feet, and the former said:

"Permit me to make you acquainted with my wife, Mr. Tate."

The woman advanced and gave Dick her hand. As she did so he had a chance to get a good look at her, and he thought that he had never seen a more striking woman.

That she was as brave as she was good he was destined to learn later on, for this woman when a girl in Scotland had performed some daring deeds that had made her famous there, and was to do similar work in America.

CHAPTER III.

THE WOMAN SPY.

"Get ready for work, boys."

"What have you found out, Dick?"

"I have discovered that there is to be a gathering of loyal settlers to-night."

"For what purpose?"

"To organize into militia."

"Where are they going to meet?"

"At Cross Creek Settlement."

"Where is that?"

"About two miles from here."

It was now about nine o'clock at night.

The Liberty Boy had eaten supper at the McDonald home and had then taken his departure and hastened back to the Liberty Boys' encampment.

The above conversation had then ensued.

"I know all erbout Cross Crick Settlement," said Lige Shull; "ever'buddy thet lives thar air Tories."

"So I judged," said Dick.

"Yes; an' Allan McDonald is ther boss Tory uv 'em all."

"I met him."

"Ye did?"

"Yes; I took supper with him and his wife."

"Flory McDonald, hey?"

"Yes, I believe he called her Flora."

"Waal, thet woman is a wunder, I tell ye, Cap'n Slater; she is purty, ez you know, hevin' seen her, an' she hain't erfraid uv nothin'."

"I should judge that she is brave."

"Thet's no name fur 'et. She goes huntin' b'ars, painters, cattymounts an' sichlike anermals, an' she allers gits some uv 'em ev'ry time."

"A huntress, eh?"

"Yes; an' she hez killed more'n wun Injun."

"Indeed?"

"Thet's er fack; an' ther redskins l'arned ter stay erway frum her house, I tell ye."

"I should have thought they would come in force and destroy her home and kill her."

"They seemed ter be erfraid ter try 'et."

"I judge there are not many Indians in this vicinity now, are there?"

"No, not menny. Thar air er good menny funder ter ther west, though, up in ther mountings."

"I am glad that there are not any in this part of the country; we will have enough to do to fight the redcoats, Tories and Hessians."

"I guess thet's er fack."

"But what about the work you were speaking about, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Well, we are going to get at that right away. We are going to go to Cross Creek Settlement and see if we can put a stop to the organizing of the loyalist militia by Captain McDonald."

"Shall we get ready now?"

"Yes."

The Liberty Boys proceeded to do so.

They were not long at this, and then six were left in charge of the encampment, while the rest moved away in the direction of the Tory settlement.

Dick and Lige Shull were in the lead as guides.

Three-quarters of an hour later they were at the edge of the valley.

They moved forward and surrounded the home of the McDonalds.

Here, so Dick had understood, the Tories were to gather to organize.

When they had surrounded the house Dick advanced and knocked on the door.

It was opened by a negress, who looked at Dick inquiringly. There was a candle burning in the hallway, which lighted up things quite distinctly.

"Wha' yo' want, sah?" the colored woman asked.

"I want to see Captain McDonald."

"He hain't heah, sah."

"Where is he?"

"Ah doan' know, sah."

At this moment Flora McDonald appeared beside the negress.

She looked at Dick keenly, and a peculiar, scornful smile appeared on her face.

"So it is you, is it, Mr. Henry Tate?" she remarked.

"Yes, Mrs. McDonald; and I would like to see Captain McDonald."

The woman smiled.

"I have no doubt regarding that," she said; "but I don't think he would care to see you just at present, when you have a strong force of rebels at your back."

The Liberty Boy was disappointed; he had expected to find Captain McDonald and perhaps twenty Tories here; and now it seemed that he was away off in his reckoning.

"What makes you think we are rebels?" he asked.

"I am sure that you are; in fact, as soon as you disappeared after supper was over this evening I made up my mind that you were a rebel, and I told my husband that it would be safer and better for him to go away from here."

The Liberty Boy doffed his hat and bowed.

"You are a shrewd woman, Mrs. McDonald," he said; "I acknowledge that you outwitted me. I did not think you would suspect me."

"What did you think about it, then?"

"I thought that you would think I had wandered away and got lost."

The woman shook her head.

"No; you are far too bright-looking for that," she said; "you are not at all the kind of youth to wander away and get lost."

"Thank you," with a smile. "I suppose there is no use asking where your husband has gone?"

"Not a bit of use of it," with a smile.

"Then we will have to search for him."

"Yes, you are free to do that."

"We will begin by searching your house, Mrs. McDonald."

"You are free to do so."

The Liberty Boy entered the house, and, taking the candle, went all through the building, looking in every room.

He did not find the captain.

Indeed, he had not expected to do so, but he was determined to search thoroughly while he was at it.

He bade Mrs. McDonald good-night politely and then left the house and told the Liberty Boys to follow him.

They went to the other four houses and surrounded them and searched there thoroughly.

Only the women were found at the houses; not a man was to be seen.

They had disappeared, as had been the case with the captain. No doubt they had gone with him.

"Well, we have slipped up on this," said Dick; "I hope to be successful in capturing the captain and the Tories but they have got away from us, thanks to the keen wit of that woman, Mrs. McDonald."

The Liberty Boy hardly knew what to do now.

He felt that it would be folly to try to find the Tories. They were familiar with the country and he was not.

Of course, Lige Shull was familiar with the country, but he said he did not think it would be possible to run the Tories to earth.

"We couldn' ketch 'em in er week," he said; "they know ther groun', an' in ther dark they could jest laff at us."

"I guess the best thing is for us to go back to our encampment," said Dick.

So they left the settlement, and made their way back toward their encampment on top of the bluff.

They did not suspect the fact, but they were being followed by a spy.

This spy was a woman—no other than Flora McDonald.

Brave, shrewd, loyal to her king, she felt that it was her duty to do all she could to aid the cause in which she was interested, and in which her husband was offering up his life.

She was used to making her way through the timber, and over the hills; in Bonnie Scotland she had been accustomed to this also. She had no difficulty in following the Liberty Boys.

They did not suspect that they were being followed, and did not try to move along silently.

On they went, and after them went Mrs. McDonald.

They climbed the slope leading to the top of the bluff, and Flora McDonald was not far behind.

When they got to the encampment and settled down there the spy was not far away.

She managed to slip past the sentinel and got close enough so that she could hear what the youths were talking about.

She learned who and what they were, and the information was of a character that was pleasing to her.

"Allan shall know this soon," she told herself; "and I am going to do my best to get him to capture these Liberty Boys, as they call themselves. I have heard of them and of their commander, Dick Slater. That was him who came to our house and ate supper and who said his name was Henry Tate. Well, he is bright and shrewd, but he will find that when it comes to dealing with Flora McDonald he will have all his wits about him if he does not want to get beaten at his own game."

She remained there an hour, and then slipped back past the sentinel and hastened away in the direction of her own home.

When she got there she found her husband awaiting her. "Where have you been?" he asked.

She told him.

He listened with interest.

"So that young fellow who took supper with us was Dick Slater, eh?" the captain remarked; "I have heard of him and of the Liberty Boys."

"So have I, Allan; and if report has it right they are dangerous."

"I have no doubt you are right about that, and that the reports we have heard are true."

"Allan, you must capture these Liberty Boys."

The officer looked thoughtful.

"I haven't enough men to do it with, as yet, wife," he said.

"Why not go over across the river and get some of those Hessians that are there to help you?"

The captain was thoughtful.

"I might do that," he said, slowly and thoughtfully.

"Yes; that is the thing to do."

"You have a good head, wife; I will do this at once."

Then he complimented her on having successfully followed the Liberty Boys to their encampment.

"I would pity the rebels had you been a man!" he said, with a smile.

"I can do a good deal of work, even though I am a woman," was the reply.

She had indeed made a good start, for she had saved her husband and the Tories from capture, and had learned the location of Dick Slater's encampment.

A little later Captain McDonald took his departure.

"I will go over across the river and get the Hessians to come and help us capture the Liberty Boys," he said.

"You will bring them here, Allan?"

"Yes."

"When do you think you will be back?"

"Oh, before morning."

CHAPTER IV.

THE HESSIANS ON THE MOVE.

Three miles south of the Cape Fear river was the home of John Stark, a prominent Tory.

Near his house was an encampment of Hessian soldiers. Their commander, a lieutenant colonel, had his headquarters in the Stark home.

Jameson was his name, and while he was not a bad looking fellow, there was something sinister in the expression of his eyes and face.

In truth, he was not a man whom one would feel like trusting fully and unreservedly.

The officer was about twenty-five years of age, and he was in love with pretty Mary Stark, the daughter of his host.

Mr. and Mrs. Stark were very well pleased to think that a British officer loved their daughter, and they hoped

that Mary would return the lieutenant's affection and become his wife; but the girl did not like Lieutenant Jameson at all.

Indeed, she disliked him; more, she distrusted him.

"I don't think he is a good man, mother," she said, when her mother spoke to her about the officer and asked her regarding the state of her feelings.

"Why, Mary, I don't see what would make you think that," her mother exclaimed; "he has always acted like a good man and a gentleman ever since he has been here."

"I know that; but I don't trust him, and I would not marry him under any consideration."

"You are a foolish girl."

"I don't think so."

"You will never get another such chance to get a good husband."

"I would rather do without a husband all my life than to marry a man I don't like, mother."

"Oh, you just think that you don't like him; you will learn better after awhile, and will learn to love him."

"Never, mother!"

The truth of the matter was that Mary was at heart a patriot maiden. Living half a mile away was a family by the name of Sutton, and Mr. Sutton was a strong patriot. He had a daughter named Lucy, and she and Mary were great friends. They had talked of the war often, and Lucy had converted Mary to the belief that the patriots were right and that the people of America ought to be free.

About midnight on the night that the events occurred of which we have been writing there came a knock at the door of the Stark home.

After an interval it was repeated, and John Stark got up, dressed, opened the door, and saw Captain Allan McDonald standing there. It was moonlight now, so it was possible to recognize the visitor.

"Ah, captain, how are you?" greeted Mr. Stark; "come inside."

Allan McDonald obeyed.

"Is Lieutenant-Colonel Jameson here?" he asked, when he had taken a seat.

"Yes."

"I would like to see him."

"He is abed and asleep, but if your business is of importance, I suppose it will be all right to get him up."

"The business is of importance."

"Very well."

Mr. Stark went to the bedroom occupied by the Hessian officer and awoke him.

"What is wanted?" was the sleepy and somewhat querulous question.

"Captain McDonald wants to see you, sir," was the reply.

"Where is he?"

"In the sitting-room."

"This is rather a late hour for a man to call to see another."

"True; but he said it was business of importance."

"Well, tell him I will be right out there."

The Tory bowed and went back to the big front room and told the captain what the officer had said.

Fifteen minutes later the lieutenant entered the room and greeted the captain, with whom he was already acquainted.

"You have some business with me?" he asked.

"Yes, I have made a discovery, Colonel Jameson."

"What is it?"

"I have learned that there is a rebel force in this vicinity."

"Humph! I knew that already; some of my men encountered the force in question and got the worst of it."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"But you didn't know who they were?"

"No, and don't yet."

"I can tell you. They are the Liberty Boys, of whom you have no doubt heard."

"Is that indeed the truth?"

"Yes."

"And you want that we shall go and capture them?"

"Yes."

"Very good; we will do it."

"At once?"

"The quicker the better, I should say."

"Yes; there is nothing to be gained by waiting."

"No; and there is a chance that they might change their place of encampment, and we might fail to capture them."

The Hessian officer went to the encampment and aroused his men. He told them that he had work for them to do, and ordered that three hundred of the soldiers get ready to go on the march at once.

They were not long in getting ready, and then, guided by Captain McDonald, they set out.

They reached the river and marched up the south shore a mile and a half. Here the river was shallow, and they waded across. As it was the month of May, the water was not cold, and the wet feet, while it might make them feel uncomfortable, would not be likely to bring on sickness.

When they were across the river they made their way to Cross Creek settlement, and here the company over which Captain McDonald had command was found. Mrs. McDonald told the men that there would be work for them to do, and they had remained awake, ready to move at a moment's notice.

This made the force number more than four hundred, and it was thought that they would be able to easily capture the Liberty Boys; especially as they expected to take the rebels by surprise.

They set out and made their way in the direction of the high bluff on which the Liberty Boys had their encampment.

The captain knew where it was from his wife's descrip-

tion of the place, and he had not much difficulty in guiding the soldiers aright.

When they reached the foot of the slope leading up to the top of the bluff they made their way along at a moderate pace. There was no need of haste, and it was hard work climbing the hill, anyway.

The timber was of rather heavy growth, but the moon was shining brightly, and the soldiers could see to make their way along.

They intended to advance until they were challenged by the sentinel, and then they would make a sudden dash forward and overwhelm the rebels.

They believed this would be easy of accomplishment.

They outnumbered their intended victims four to one and ought to be able to get the better of them easily.

They toiled onward until they were within one hundred yards of the top of the hill, and then suddenly were challenged.

"Halt! Who comes there?"

The Hessians and Tory militia did not reply, but dashed forward.

The sentinel fired a shot, which rang out loudly.

CHAPTER V.

A BRAVE GIRL.

Mary Stark slept in a room that was right over the sitting-room.

She was awakened by the knocking of Captain McDonald, and when she heard her father open the door her curiosity to know who the late visitor was caused her to get out of bed and place her eye to a crack in the floor through which it was possible to see what was going on in the room below.

She recognized Captain McDonald, for she had seen him a number of times since he had been made a captain, and before as well.

"I wonder what he wants?" she asked herself.

She was determined to find out.

She listened, and heard the captain tell her father that he wished to see the Hessian officer.

"Now, I wonder what that means?" thought Mary.

She was determined to find out. All she would have to do would be to wait and listen to the conversation between the two, when the Hessian officer should put in an appearance.

She put in the time dressing, and when the lieutenant colonel appeared she listened to the conversation that ensued with a great deal of interest.

When she learned that a scheme to capture a patriot force was on foot she became alert.

"I wish that I could warn them," she said to herself; "if I knew where they were I would do so."

Presently she was delighted to hear the captain tell where the Liberty Boys were encamped.

"I know where that is," she said to herself; "and I am going to go and warn the patriots of their danger."

She waited till the captain and the Hessian officer had taken their departure and her father had gone back to bed, and then she slipped down the stairs, out of doors and away through the timber.

She was a brave pioneer girl and did not have any fears for her safety in going out thus at night.

She had often been out alone at night.

She walked to the river and hunted along till she found a small boat that was often used when fishing.

She got into the boat and rowed across the river.

She got out when she reached the farther shore, and tied the painter to a tree.

Then she made her way along the shore, and climbed the slope leading to the top of the bluff.

She was almost to the top when she was challenged by one of the sentinels.

"Are you a Liberty Boy?" the girl asked.

"Why do you ask?" the sentinel replied.

"Because if you are, I wish to see your commander. I have some important information for him."

When the girl reached the point where the Liberty Boy stood, and he saw that it was a girl who had been talking to him he was somewhat surprised, though he had thought that the voice was not that of a man.

"You say you wish to see Dick Slater miss?" the youth asked.

"Yes, if he is your commander."

"He is; wait a few moments until I summon the officer of the guard. He will conduct you to the captain."

"Thank you."

A few minutes later the officer of the guard put in appearance. It happened that this was Bob Estabrook, and he at once told the girl to come along with him.

Dick was asleep, but was quickly awakened by Bob, and he leaped up, wideawake on the instant.

He bowed to the girl, and said:

"Your errand must be of importance to bring you here at this time of the night, miss."

"It is, sir; it is of importance to you, at least."

"I thank you in advance for your kindness, Miss——"

"My name is Mary Stark."

"Where do you live, Miss Stark?"

"About two and a half miles south of the river, sir."

"And what is the information you have for me?"

The girl told him all.

As may be supposed, Dick was greatly interested.

"So that is the scheme, eh?" he remarked, when he had heard all. "They are going to try to surprise us and capture us, are they?"

"Yes, sir."

"And they will be here before long, I should say."

A number of the Liberty Boys who were near at hand

had been awakened by the girl's advent, and were sitting up listening to the conversation.

When the conversation was brought to a close and Mary said she must be getting back to her home Dick said:

"I will send one of my Liberty Boys along with you to see that you get home safely."

"There is no need of that, Mr. Slater. I am not at all afraid."

"Perhaps not; still, there is danger that you might be attacked by a wild animal of some kind, and so I insist on sending one of my boys along as an escort."

Scarcely had Dick ceased speaking when one of the youths near at hand leaped up.

He did not say anything, but Dick understood that the youth in question was ready to accompany the girl.

Frank Felton was the young fellow's name, and he was a good-hearted, generous, honest youth, one to be trusted anywhere.

"You go with Miss Stark, Frank," said Dick.

"All right, Dick."

Then Dick introduced them to each other, and they set out, after he had thanked the girl for what she had done for them.

"But for your kindness and bravery in coming here with the news, we might have been captured," he said.

"I am glad that I was able to do something for the good of the patriot cause," said the girl.

Accompanied by Frank Felton, she made her way back to where she had left her boat.

They both got in, and Frank took the oars and rowed across.

He assisted the girl to the shore, although she protested that she did not need any assistance.

Then he tied the painter to a tree, and they set out through the timber.

Frank now began talking to the girl.

He was greatly struck with her; to tell the truth, he was falling in love with the girl. He had taken a great liking to her the moment his eyes fell upon her face.

And now, as he talked to her, he found that he was sure to like her more and more as he grew better acquainted with her.

Mary was a bright, sensible, noble-hearted girl, and her talk proved this. There was no foolishness about her.

Frank wanted to be at the encampment when the Hessians got there, so as to take part in the fight that was sure to ensue, but at the same time, he wanted to prolong the trip to Mary's home so that he might be with her as long as possible.

They arrived at the Stark home presently, however, and Frank bade the girl good-night, first asking her if he might call and see her.

She told him that he might, and he hastened back toward the encampment, fairly bubbling over with happiness.

He crossed the river in the girl's boat, and then hastened on to the top of the bluff.

He found the youths all ready for business. They were stationed behind the trees, muskets in hand, and were awaiting the coming of the enemy.

"I got back in time after all!" said Frank, to Bob Estabrook.

"Yes, and I am somewhat surprised that such is the case, Frank," was the reply.

"Yah, und so vos I surbrised," said Carl Gookenspieler; "uf id vos peen minesellufs vat vent mit der girl home, I vould not pe pack so soon, alretty."

"Ah, g'wan wid yez, Cookyspieler," said Patsy Brannigan; "yez would niver be afther getthin' a chance to walk wid such a beautiful girrul as thot wan, so yez wouldn't!"

"Und you vould nod get to walk mit dose girls, Batsy Prannigan."

"Shut up, both of you," said Ben Spurlock; "the Hessians will be coming soon, and they will hear you and know that they are not going to surprise us."

"All righd; I vos peen shoost lige von glam-shell, shut up tightness, alretty," said Carl.

There was no more talk. Everything was quiet until at last the youths heard one of the sentinels give utterance to a challenge, following which was the sound of a musket-shot.

"They are coming! Now give them a warm reception!" said Dick, and this word was sent along the line.

A few moments later the Hessians were seen coming through the timber.

CHAPTER VI.

"AFTER THE HESSIANS."

The Liberty Boys had received their instructions, and they now took as good aim as was possible, and at the signal from Dick—a shrill whistle—they fired a volley.

Crash! Roar!

The volley rang out loudly.

Then on the air rose groans, shrieks and yells.

A number of the Hessians had been killed and wounded.

This came as a surprise to them.

They had expected to surprise the rebels, and had themselves been the ones who were served thus.

They were determined to capture the patriot force, however, and they came on as rapidly as possible.

"Give them a volley!" cried Colonel Jameson.

The Hessians fired a volley.

The Liberty Boys were so well sheltered that not much damage was done to them, however.

And on their part they proceeded to treat the Hessians to volley after volley from the pistols.

Every Liberty Boy had four pistols, and by the time they had fired the fourth volley the Hessians were demoralized.

They retreated, in spite of the commands of Colonel Jameson and Captain McDonald.

The two officers followed their men, scolding them and berating them for retreating, but they could not get the youths stopped until they were almost at the foot of the slope.

The instant he noted that the enemy was retreating, Dick ordered his youths to reload their weapons.

They went to work at once. First they loaded their muskets, and then their pistols.

While they were thus engaged they could hear the groans of the wounded Hessians.

"Do you think they will come back and make another attack, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I don't know; all we can do is to wait and be ready for them if they do come."

"That's so."

"I suppose that you hope they will come, Bob," said Mark Morrison.

"Yes, I do."

"Und so do minesellufs," said Carl Gookenspieler.

"Yis yez do!" said Patsy Brannigan, scornfully; "shut an' Oi'll wager innythn' thot yez are afther hopin' der spalpanes wull niver come back, so yez are."

"Dot peen nod der trut', Batsy Prannigan; I vos lieder do fighd dose redgoats and Hessians, und you vos knoe dot."

"Yis, Oi know it—over dhe lift shouldther."

"Stop quarreling, you two," said Ben Spurlock; "I don't believe either one of you want the enemy to come back."

"Oh, come now, Bin, me bye," protested Patsy; "i yersilf is afther knowin' betther dhan thot."

"Yah, dot is so," from Carl; "Pen knows dot ve are der pest fighders vat never vos, und dot ve vould rather fighd dan eat ven ve are hungry."

"I don't know any such thing. All I know about you two is that you are great hands to talk."

"And so is ivery blissid wun av dhe Liberty Boys," said Patsy.

Then the youths subsided, for they feared that the enemy might return at any moment.

They waited and watched, but the Hessians did not renew the attack.

They sent up a small force, instead, with the request that they be permitted to carry away their dead and wounded.

This request was granted, and they took up their dead and wounded and carried them back down the hill.

"I guess that ends the affair," said Bob, with a sigh of regret.

"Yes, for to-night, at least," agreed Dick.

"Oh, I haf so much sorriness aboud dot!" said Carl Gookenspieler. "I vos shoost aboud retty to make so much slaughter pizness mit der retgoats, und now I von't have some shances."

"Yis, yez'd shlaughter dhem, Oi am not t'inkin'!" said Patsy, in scorn.

"Vell, I gould kill so menny as vat you gould, Batsy annigan, und dot is der trut'."

There was no further alarm before morning.

The Hessians had had all they wanted.

They outnumbered the Liberty Boys greatly, but had led to take them by surprise, and had got the worst of the affair and did not feel like repeating the attempt.

They went into camp at Cross Creek Settlement, and Lieutenant-Colonel Jameson took up his quarters in Captain McDonald's house.

Flora McDonald was up when the two officers came to the house. She had heard the firing and was eager to learn how the attack had succeeded.

When the officers told her that the plan had been a failure she was greatly surprised and disappointed.

"You say they were awake and waiting for you?" she claimed; "I don't understand it. I wonder how they knew that the attack was to be made?"

"Impossible to say," said the colonel, shaking his head.

"It is a mystery how they learned about it," said the captain; "but they certainly had information to the effect, they were ready for us."

"Well, well! I am sorry that you did not succeed," said Mrs. McDonald.

"We haven't given up yet," said the colonel.

"No," from the captain; "we will capture those rascally fellows yet."

"Why wouldn't it be a good plan to surround their encampment and starve them into surrendering?" asked the woman.

"I have been thinking of that," said the colonel; "they occupy such a strong position that to capture them by force would mean the deaths of a large number of our men."

"I don't think that it is likely they have any great supply of provisions," said the captain; "and they could hold out long."

"And by getting between them and the river we could cut off their water supply," the colonel said; "it seems to me the plan is practical."

They decided to wait, however, and reconnoiter the Liberty Boys' position on the morrow.

This they did.

It was decided to surround the youths' encampment, and to wait till night.

The two officers, Colonel Jameson and Captain McDonald, did not think there was any danger that the rebels would try to leave their position during the day, but in thinking thus they were mistaken.

They did not know Dick Slater as yet.

He was one who believed that the boldest plan was usually the best one.

He had scouts out, the same as was the case with the Hessians, and when the Liberty Boys' scouts came in and told him that the Hessian scouts had all gone back to the encampment at Cross Creek settlement he got ready to act.

"We will give the Hessians a surprise," he said.

"Are we going to get after them, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Yes; they intend to surround our position to-night, I am certain; and we won't wait. We will slip away from here and make a wide detour and attack them."

"Jove, that is a bold plan," said Bob; "but it is just in accordance with my ideas. I am in for doing it."

The youths were all in for doing this. It would be a daring feat, but that would not matter. They liked to enter into encounters where the odds against them were sufficient to make the affair very interesting.

The youths broke camp, got everything in readiness, and then led their horses down the slope slowly and cautiously.

They did not know but there might be some Hessian scouts in the vicinity, and it was necessary that they should be careful.

The youths did not encounter any scouts, however, and finally they reached a road where it would be possible for them to ride instead of walk.

They climbed into the saddle and rode along a mile or more. Then they dismounted and led their horses into the timber far enough so that they could not be seen from the road, and tied them to trees.

"Now, Lige, you take the lead and guide us to Cross Creek Settlement," said Dick.

"All right, Cap'n Slater."

The hunter took the lead and the Liberty Boys followed.

They walked along an hour or so, and then Lige turned to Dick, and said:

"We air a'mos' thar, Cap'n Slater."

"How much farther is it?"

"Oh, erbout er quarter uv er mile."

"Well, lead on, but go very slowly."

The Liberty Boys were approaching the settlement from the opposite direction from where their encampment had been, and this would be likely to make it easier for them to slip up close without being seen.

Another thing that was in their favor was that the Hessians would not for one moment think of such a thing as that the rebels would dare make an attack on them.

There was only one sentinel on the side from which the Liberty Boys were approaching, and Dick knew that if this sentinel could be captured without alarming the Hessians it would be possible to surprise the enemy.

"And if we can surprise them we can strike them a blow and get away before they awaken to the realization of what has happened," he said to himself.

He decided to make the attempt to capture the sentinel.

He stole forward slowly and cautiously.

He was an expert woodsman. He was equal to an Indian almost, and he succeeded in slipping up to within two yards of the Hessian without having made any noise to alarm him.

The Liberty Boy took a cautious look in the direction of the settlement, did not see any more signs of the Hessians, and then suddenly leaped forward and grasped the sentinel by the throat. The fellow's back was toward Dick, and

the first he knew that he was in danger was when he felt the iron-like grip of Dick's fingers on his throat.

He attempted to cry out, but could not.

The fingers gripped his neck so tightly that he could not utter a sound.

They compressed his windpipe to such an extent that he could not get his breath.

The only thing he could do was to struggle.

This he did. He struggled as fiercely as he could, but to no avail. Dick had secured such an advantage that it would be impossible for the Hessian to break his hold.

The fellow's struggles soon became less strong and fierce. He was gradually succumbing.

The Liberty Boy kept a wary eye in the direction of the settlement, for he did not know but some of the Hessians might put in an appearance at almost any moment.

None did, however, and presently the sentinel was choked into unconsciousness.

When this had been accomplished Dick lifted the insensible man and carried him to where the Liberty Boys were and placed him on the ground.

"Good for you, Dick!" said Bob; "you made a success of it, sure. The fellow never uttered a squeak."

"We will be able to take the Hessians by surprise now," said Dick; "are you ready, Liberty Boys?"

"Yes, we are ready," replied Mark Morrison, and the others nodded assent.

"Then come along; we will walk until we get close up to the edge of the settlement, and then we will make a sudden dash forward and give it to them hot and heavy and then get away again."

This plan was followed to the letter.

They made their way along slowly until they were almost to the edge of the settlement and then Dick gave the signal for the advance.

The youths dashed forward at the top of their speed.

They held their muskets in readiness for instant use.

A few moments later they burst into the encampment.

That their appearance was unexpected was evident.

The Hessians were encamped beyond the four houses, and seemed to feel perfectly secure, for they were lolling around on their blankets spread on the ground and were taking it easy.

The youths paused suddenly, and taking quick aim, fired a volley.

They were so close that they could not have helped doing a lot of damage, even had they not been good marksmen. As they were expert shots, however, and took aim before firing, they did great execution.

At least fifty of the Hessians sank down dead and wounded.

The suddenness of the attack paralyzed the enemy, and the soldiers sat there as if stunned.

The Liberty Boys had time to draw their pistols and fire a couple of volleys before the enemy awakened to a realization of what was happening.

Then the youths dashed away at the top of their speed.

They went so quickly and swiftly that the Hessians, although they leaped up and fired a volley as quickly as possible, did not do any particular damage. Three of the youths received wounds, but not serious ones.

It was as successful as anything could possibly be. The Liberty Boys were certainly to be congratulated on the achievement.

They had attacked boldly and in broad daylight a force nearly four times as strong as their own, and had killed and wounded a number of the enemy and had made them escape without losing a man.

The Hessians attempted to pursue the Liberty Boys but found that it would be folly on their part, for the youths were so swift-footed as to make it impossible for the soldiers to catch them.

They quickly gave up the attempt at pursuit and turned to the settlement.

Colonel Jameson and Captain McDonald were on the ground now, and they asked questions regarding the attack.

They had not been able to get there in time to take part in the affair, as they had been at the home of the captain.

To say that they were angry is stating the case mildly.

They were wild with rage.

That the comparatively small party of rebels should have the audacity to come and make an attack, when they should have been trying to make their escape was something that they could not understand. It was contrary to the way it would have been expected to act.

But then this force was made up of the Liberty Boys and they were no common youths.

They might be expected always to do things that no one else would attempt to do.

The two officers began figuring on trying to get even with the youths, however. They at once sent out scouts to follow the Liberty Boys and learn where they were going.

These scouts came back two hours later, and said that the enemy had gone into camp three miles away, but that they did not believe it was to be a permanent camp.

"Why didn't you stay and watch them, then?" Captain McDonald asked.

"Why, I think they are going to stay there the rest of the day," one of the scouts replied.

"Then we will march there at once," said Colonel Jameson.

"Yes; perhaps we may be able to take them by surprise as they did us," said the captain.

Leaving a small number of men to look after the wounded, the rest of the Hessians and Tories marched away, guided by one of the scouts.

They had learned caution now, and they advanced slowly and carefully, and had out a number of scouts, so as to avoid being taken by surprise.

They arrived at the point where the Liberty Boys had been encamped, but the youths were not there. They found a broken camp and gone.

the Hessians were disappointed.

They had hoped to get a chance to get even with the enemy for the blow it had struck them. But now they had depended on it.

"Never mind; we will catch them sooner or later," said Captain McDonald.

CHAPTER VII.

FLORA McDONALD IS CAPTURED.

"Did you catch them, Allan?"

"No, wife."

"That is too bad!"

"Yes, but those Liberty Boys are slippery young rascals."

"Yes, and dangerous ones, too, it seems."

"You are right; they have proved that."

"Yes, indeed; it was a daring thing, their dashing right into the settlement and attacking your force."

"It is just in accordance with what I have heard regarding them."

Captain McDonald had returned after the unsuccessful search for the Liberty Boys and had gone to his home, where the above conversation had ensued.

Mrs. McDonald was more disappointed than was the captain with her husband, if that could be possible. She was a good, noble-hearted woman, but was intensely loyal to the king, and wished that the representatives of his cause should triumph in every case.

"Where did the Liberty Boys go, Allan?" she asked.

"That is what we do not know."

"Couldn't you find out?"

"No; they have disappeared, and we could find no traces of them."

The woman's lips came together in a determined manner, and she said:

"I will learn where they have gone."

"I would rather you would not bother, wife," said Captain McDonald. "Leave all such things to the soldiers."

"Don't worry about me, Allan. I will get along all right; and I enjoy doing something for the good of the king's cause."

"You must be very careful."

"I will be; but I am going to find the Liberty Boys, wherever they have gone clear out of the country."

A little later she left the house and moved away through the timber.

She searched three or four hours, but could not find the hiding-place of the Liberty Boys.

She was about to give up and return to her home, when she suddenly found herself surrounded by at least a score of youths, who appeared almost as if by magic.

They were the Liberty Boys, and had stepped out from behind the trees.

Captain Slater appeared right in front of Mrs. McDonald, and doffed his hat and bowed.

"Good-evening, Mrs. McDonald," he said.

The woman was taken aback. There could be no doubt regarding this. But she was a brave old woman, cool-headed and calm in face of danger, and she bowed and smiled, at the same time saying:

"Good-evening, Captain Slater."

"Were you looking for somebody, Mrs. McDonald?"

"Yes, to tell the truth, I was."

"Who?"

"You."

"Ah, you were looking for me?"

"Yes, you and your Liberty Boys."

"Why did you wish to find us?"

Mrs. McDonald hesitated. Then she evidently decided that it would be best to tell the truth. She seemed to realize that it would be useless to try to deceive Dick Slater.

"I wished to find where you were encamped, so that I might tell the king's soldiers and have them come and capture you."

"You are frank and candid, Mrs. McDonald," said Dick; "and I honor you for it."

"It is as well to be so—especially with you, Captain Slater. I know that I could not deceive you, even if I were to try."

"Thank you," with a smile. "But, Mrs. McDonald, do you realize your position?"

"I can't say, Captain Slater. I suppose, however, I am a prisoner."

"Yes, you are a prisoner, and you are in reality a spy. Do you know the fate that is usually meted out to spies when they are captured?"

The woman nodded.

"They are shot or hanged," she replied. "At least, I have heard so."

"You are right; and now, what are we to do with you?"

The woman shook her head.

"That is not for me to say, Captain Slater."

The young commander looked at the woman a few moments in silence. Then he said:

"If you will give me your promise to go straight back home, Mrs. McDonald, I will let you go free."

The woman hesitated. Then she realized that it would be very foolish of her to refuse the chance given her, and so she said:

"I give you the promise, Captain Slater, but it is only for this one time."

"Very well, Mrs. McDonald, and you must remember that it is only for this one time that I agree to give you your freedom."

This was spoken quietly, but there was a warning in the words and tones.

"I understand, Captain Slater. Well, I will go. Good-by, and thank you for your kindness to me in this instance."

"You are welcome; but I would advise you that you

refrain from taking any further part in the struggle, Mrs. McDonald."

"Thank you for the advice," and with a bow she turned and walked away, the youths parting and making a way for her to pass through.

"Shall I follow and see that she really goes to her home, Dick?" asked Sam Sanderson.

"There is no need, Sam. She has given her word, and she will keep it. She will go straight home."

"We had better move our encampment from this vicinity, though, don't you think so, Dick?" remarked Bob.

"Likely it will be as well; she may feel free to tell where she found us, and the Hessians might come here and try to capture us."

So the Liberty Boys moved the encampment, and the hunter, Lige Shull, led the way to a spot that seemed to promise well, so far as security was concerned.

Meanwhile Mrs. McDonald was making her way back toward Cross Creek Settlement.

She arrived there shortly after nightfall.

When she entered she found her husband walking the floor of the sitting-room, looking worried.

"Ah, back again, wife?" he exclaimed; "I am glad, for I began to fear something had happened to you."

The woman smiled wearily.

"Something did happen to me," she said.

Captain McDonald looked anxious and worried.

"What happened to you?" she asked.

"I was captured by the Liberty Boys."

"What! You don't mean to say that you were really a prisoner in their hands?"

"I do mean to say that very thing."

"How, then, does it happen that you are here? How did you manage to make your escape?"

"I didn't manage it at all."

"What do you mean? Explain."

"Captain Slater let me go free."

The captain looked surprised.

"Is that so, really?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well, well! How did he come to do that?"

"He said that he would let me go this time if I would promise to come straight home."

"And you promised, of course?"

"Yes; I should have been foolish to do otherwise."

"True; well, this Captain Slater is not a bad sort of fellow, is he?"

"No."

"It is not every rebel captain that would have been so generous."

"That is true."

"And you succeeded in doing what no one of the Hessian scouts were able to do—found the rebel encampment."

"Yes, and what do you think about it, husband? I know where their encampment is; ought I to give you the information and let you go and make an attack on them?"

"I think so; all the promise that you made was you would come straight home; is not that the case?"

"Yes, but I have a shrewd suspicion, Allan, that if you were to go to the place where they were encamped you would not find them."

"I rather think so myself; still, it is worth while trying, if you will tell me where to go to find the Liberty Boys."

"I can tell you where they were."

"Very well; do so, then."

The woman complied.

Then the captain went to the encampment and told Lieutenant-Colonel Jameson what his wife had told him, and they talked the matter over.

They decided to go and see if the Liberty Boys were still at the place where they had been encamped. When Mrs. McDonald found them.

It did not take them long to get ready to march, then they set out.

At last they arrived at the place described by Mrs. McDonald, only to find that the Liberty Boys had disappeared. Again the Hessians and Tories were disappointed.

They made their way back toward Cross Creek Settlement.

"Those Liberty Boys are about the most slippery customers I have ever had anything to do with," said Captain McDonald.

"Yes, they are certainly hard to catch," said Colonel Jameson.

When they arrived at the settlement the soldiers went into camp, and the two officers went to the captain's house.

Mrs. McDonald was awaiting their coming.

"You did not find them?" she asked.

"No, wife," was the captain's reply.

"I was afraid that would be the case."

"So was I; but we have done our duty, and that is all that anybody can do."

"True."

"We will catch those Liberty Boys sooner or later, Mrs. McDonald," said Colonel Jameson.

"I hope so, colonel."

The captain and the colonel ate supper, and then went to the sitting-room and smoked awhile, after which they went to bed.

Although the Hessians had not found the Liberty Boys, the latter had knowledge that their enemy had been looking for them. They had left scouts there to watch for the Hessians, and these scouts reached the patriot encampment about eleven o'clock at night and told Dick that the Hessians had been looking for them, but had gone back disappointed.

"I was sure they would come to our late encampment," said Dick.

"And so was I," from Bob.

"Yah, I vos t'ought dot der Hessians would ve lookt vor us, alretty," said Carl Gookenspieler.

"Oh, g'wan wid yez, Cookyspiller," said Patsy Brannigan. "Phwat d'yez know abhout it, innyhow?"

"I know such a muchness as vat you don'd vos know, Batsy Prannigan."

"Yis, an' who could be afther undtherstandin' inny such talkin' av dhe English language as thot, Oi'd loike to know?" with scorn.

"Eferpody gan dose lanquishes understand but you, Batsy Prannigan, an' nobody expects you to understand."

The Liberty Boys passed a quiet night. They were not disturbed in any way.

Next morning they got ready to start out again. They were going to get after the Hessians.

CHAPTER VIII.

HIDE AND SEEK.

They sent out scouts ahead to keep a lookout for the enemy, as they did not want to run any risk of being taken by surprise.

About the middle of the forenoon one of the scouts came to Dick with the report that a strong force of Hessians and Tory militia had come across the river.

"How many men in the force?" asked Dick.

"Five hundred, at least."

Dick looked thoughtful.

"Jove, that's quite a number," he remarked.

"Yes, but what do we care, Dick?" said Bob Estabrook. "We can whip them, anyway."

Dick shook his head and looked sober.

"No, they are too many for us, Bob," he said. Then he added:

"Where did this force go?"

"To Cross Creek Settlement."

"Then there must be a force of nearly eight hundred soldiers there."

"Yes."

"They have come over to make a campaign against us, Dick," said Mark Morrison.

"It looks that way."

"There can be no doubt about it," said Bob Estabrook.

"What are we to do?" asked Sam Sanderson.

"That is the question," said Dick, "and it is one that we must settle right away."

"Yah, ve must seddle dose guestions righd ervay ter onst, alretty," said Carl Gookenspieler.

"Oh, phwat do yez know abhout it, Cookyspiller?" sneered Patsy Brannigan; "yez could not be afther sittling anythin', begorra."

"Und dot is all vat you know aboudid dot."

"You two fellows keep still," said Ben Spurlock; "you don't either one of you know what you are talking about."

"Oh, g'wan wid yez, Bin, me bye."

The youths discussed the matter quite awhile, and at last Dick came to a decision.

"I'll tell you what we will do, boys," he said; "we will go over across the river and see if we can run across a party of Hessians or redcoats. If so, we will give it to them, while those on this side are searching for us in this vicinity."

"That's a good scheme," said Bob Estabrook.

"Yah, dot is der skeem," said Carl Gookenspieler.

This was settled, and the youths at once made their way to the river. They were mounted on their horses, of course, and they rode into the water and the horses swam across.

They then set out along the road, and kept on going till they had covered a distance of two and a half or three miles. Then they turned aside into the timber, and presently came to a stop and went into camp.

Six of the youths were left in the encampment, and the rest made their way through the timber slowly and cautiously. They were not familiar with the lay of the land, and did not know at what moment they might run upon the enemy."

They did not succeed in finding any Hessians, however, and so they returned to the encampment and ate their dinners.

"It is hardly worth while for all of us to go and search for the enemy," said Dick. "I will go out and do some scouting alone."

"Why not let several of us go, Dick?" asked Bob.

"You mean for each to go in a different direction, of course?"

"Yes."

"Well, that isn't a bad idea."

So it was decided that six of the youths should go out on a scouting expedition, and they did so.

Dick went almost due south, and after he had been scouting around an hour or so he discovered an encampment of Hessians.

There were about one hundred and fifty of the soldiers, and they were taking it easy. They were sitting and lolling around, talking and laughing. Evidently they did not think of such a thing as that they might be in danger.

The Liberty Boy sized them up carefully and then hastened back to the encampment.

"I have located a party of Hessians," he told the youths. "Come along, all of you."

The Liberty Boys were eager to start, and were quickly in readiness.

They set out and made their way along under Dick's guidance till they were within half a mile of the Hessian encampment, and then they proceeded very slowly and cautiously.

They seized their muskets and got ready to offer battle.

This made it more of an even affair, as the Hessians outnumbered the Liberty Boys quite a good deal. They did not understand the art of taking advantage of the trees as a shelter for their bodies, however, and thus they

were more exposed than was the case with the Liberty Boys.

Soon the cracking of muskets was heard.

The engagement had begun.

Both parties were firing, but most of the execution was done by the Liberty Boys. They were sheltered behind trees, and took careful aim, while the Hessians did not shelter themselves and fired without taking aim—practically at random, indeed.

After a number of the Hessians had fallen dead and wounded the rest retreated.

The Liberty Boys followed and fired several pistol volleys, but did not succeed in doing a great deal of damage.

Then they made their way back to where they had been stationed when the encounter began.

Here they found one Liberty Boy dead and two wounded.

They dressed the wounds of the two as best they could, and found that they were too severely injured to remain with the company. One of the two was Frank Felton, who had fallen in love with pretty Mary Stark, and Dick decided that they would take the two to the girl's home, where, he knew, they would be given the best of attention.

They buried the dead Liberty Boy and then took up the wounded youths in blanket hammocks, and set out toward the home of Mary Stark.

When they arrived there, and Dick asked Mrs. Stark if they might leave the two wounded Liberty Boys there, she said that they could.

"We will take the best of care of them," the woman said; "won't we, Mary?"

"Yes," replied Mary, and then as she caught a glance from the eyes of Frank Felton she blushed and felt confused.

The wounded youths were placed on the bed in the sleeping-room adjoining the sitting-room, and then Dick named a Liberty Boy who was to remain and help the woman and girl take care of the youths.

This having been attended to, the Liberty Boys took their departure and returned to where they had left their horses.

This happened to be a good place for a camp, and so the youths settled down to take it easy for the rest of the day.

They were not disturbed during the rest of the afternoon. Everything was quiet.

"Well, we played a pretty shrewd trick on the Hessians, anyway," said Bob Estabrook. "They are looking for us over on the north side of the river, and we came over here and made things lively for some Hessians on this side of the stream."

"Yes, we have done pretty well," said Dick. "If we can keep this up—if we can keep after the Hessians, instead of having them after us, we will be all right."

"Yes, that's so."

After supper Dick set out on a scouting expedition.

He suspected that the Hessians who had gone over to the south side of the river might hear of what had hap-

pened on the north side and came back, and he wished to learn whether or not this was the case.

He made his way to the river at a point where it could be forded and settled down to watch.

It was not dark, as the moon was up, and he could see up and down the river quite a distance.

He had been there only a short time when he saw several dark forms entering the water on the opposite side of the stream.

"There they come," he said to himself. "I thought they would be getting back to this side; the news of the attack on the Hessian force was taken to them, as I am sure it would be."

He watched until he was sure that he was right, and then he turned and hastened back to the Liberty Boys' encampment.

"The Hessians are coming, boys!" he said.

"Are they?" remarked Sam Sanderson.

"Yes."

"Let them come," said Bob Estabrook. "We are ready for them."

"Not for six or seven hundred," said Dick.

"Is such a strong force as that coming?" remarked Mark Morrison.

"Yes."

"Oh, well, let's give them battle, anyway. We can win them."

"No; we must exercise caution, Bob. Remember, we are away down here a long distance from home, and have to depend upon ourselves. We mustn't take chances."

"Do you think they are likely to find our encampment?" asked Ben Spurlock.

"They might do so if we remained here."

"Ah, then you are thinking of going away?"

"Yes; we will go back to the north side of the river." The Liberty Boys laughed.

This idea struck them as being a good one, and it would be rather amusing to fool the enemy in this manner a second time.

They were ready for the move, and it did not take them long to bridle and saddle their horses.

This done they set out, and they made a half circle so as to avoid all chance of meeting the Hessians. When they reached the river they rode into the water, and their horses swam across.

When they were on the north side of the stream they headed for the top of the high bluff, where they had their first encampment.

They knew that they would be safe here, for at least.

They settled down to rest until morning.

They were up early, and after they had eaten their breakfast Dick went down to the Cross Creek Settlement to see if the Hessians had remained there.

He saw about fifty.

"Jove, we will make those fellows hunt for a hiding place!" he said to himself.

Then he hastened back to the encampment and told the youths to come along with him.

He explained where they were going, and why, and the Liberty Boys were ready for the work.

They were not long in reaching the Settlement, and they dashed forward, intending to get to the Hessians before they could get out of the way.

They would have done so but for Mrs. McDonald, who happened to come out of the house nearest to where the Hessians were encamped just at the moment the Liberty Boys rushed out of the timber. She saw them and ran and warned the Hessians.

Just back of where the Hessians had been encamped was a stone wall five feet high and two hundred yards long. There was an old stable there, also, which took the place of the wall for its length, and Flora McDonald pointed to the open stable door and cried out:

"Go through the old stable, men, and make your escape. I will hold the rebels back!"

The Hessians obeyed.

They dashed through the doorway and disappeared from sight.

"After them, Liberty Boys!" cried Dick. "We must not let them escape!"

"We'll catch them, Dick!" cried Bob Estabrook.

But they had not reckoned on Flora McDonald and the part she was to play.

As soon as she saw that the Hessians had all got through the stable door she ran back and took up her position here.

In a belt around her waist were two pistols, and as the Liberty Boys advanced she drew the pistols, and a determined expression appeared on her face.

"Back!" cried Flora McDonald, leveling her pistols; "you can't come through here!"

"Over the fence with you, boys!" cried Dick. "We'll catch the rascals yet!"

The youths obeyed the command with alacrity.

They leaped to the top of the stone fence and then on over on to the ground—all save half a dozen, who stood confronting Flora McDonald.

One of these was Mark Morrison, and he said:

"You might as well let us through, Mrs. McDonald; the other boys are leaping over the wall, as you see, and you cannot keep them back."

"All who pursue the king's soldiers will have to climb the fence," was the determined reply; "not one goes through here unless he goes over my dead body!"

Flora McDonald's eyes flashed.

She was even more striking now when bidding defiance to the rebels than she had been before, and the youths could not help noting the fact, admiring her as a result.

"Come along, boys! We'll climb over!" said Mark, and the youths dashed away.

Mrs. McDonald leveled her pistols, and a peculiar light

shone in her eyes for a moment. Then she shook her head and lowered the weapons and placed them in her belt.

"No!" she exclaimed aloud. "Flora McDonald could never do such a thing as that. And those Liberty Boys are too brave and magnanimous to be treated thus, even were I disposed to do so."

A few moments later all the Liberty Boys had disappeared from sight, and Flora McDonald walked slowly to her home and disappeared within the house.

CHAPTER IX.

MOVING ABOUT.

The Liberty Boys chased the Hessians quite a distance, but failed to overtake them.

They fired a couple of volleys, but did not do any damage to the Hessians.

Then they made their way back to the Settlement.

They went to the point where the Hessians had been encamped and secured the muskets that had been left behind by the soldiers in their hasty flight.

Then they left the settlement and went back to their own encampment on the top of the bluff.

The youths were disappointed.

They had hoped to capture a number of the redecoated Hessians, but, thanks to Flora McDonald, had failed.

"Say, Dick, that woman seems to be always popping up to spoil our plans," said Bob Estabrook.

"Yes, she is very wideawake, Bob."

"Yah, dot vомans nefer schleeps, und I vill pet me on dot," said Carl Gookenspieler.

"Shure an' Oi would radther foight a whole rigiment av Hessians dhan to hev to look out for thot woman," said Patsy Brannigan.

And in thus estimating the abilities of Flora McDonald the youths were not far wrong.

She was a dangerous woman, indeed.

She watched the youths as they left the settlement, and then she followed them.

She did not lose sight of them until they reached their encampment, and then she made a detour, went down to the river, searched along the shore until she found a boat, and then she got into the boat and rowed across the stream.

Disembarking when she reached the south shore, she tied the boat's painter to a tree and hastened away in the direction where she thought she would find the Hessian force under Colonel Jameson and the loyalist militia under her husband.

She had to search two or three hours before she succeeded, and then she found the force.

When she told the two officers how the Liberty Boys had succeeded in fooling them by slipping across the river and making an attack on the Hessians who had been left

at Cross Creek Settlement, the colonel and the captain were very angry.

"Those Liberty Boys are slippery chaps," said the captain.

"Yes, slippery as eels," agreed the colonel. "But we'll get them sooner or later."

"What will you do now?" asked Flora McDonald.

"Why, we will go right back across the river and surround the young rascals and capture them," said the colonel.

"That is the thing to do," agreed the captain.

So the order was given that the soldiers right about face and march back.

This was done.

They marched up the stream to the point where it was fordable and then crossed. The stream crooked and wound around through the timber to such a degree that the soldiers felt that they would not be seen by the Liberty Boys.

In this they were mistaken, however.

Carl Gookenspieler was one of the guards at the encampment on the bluff, and it happened that he was stationed at a point from where it was possible to see up the stream to where the Hessians were wading across.

He caught sight of the first battalion of Hessians that started to cross, and gave utterance to a shout.

"Oh, loog at dem! Loog at dem!" he cried, pointing.

"Der Hesshuns are crossing der riffer! Der Hesshuns are goming do fighd us, py shimminetty!"

Dick and Bob were standing at no great distance talking, and when they heard the Dutch youth's exclamation they ran to where he was and looked up the stream in the direction indicated by the excited youth.

"Jove, Dick, Carl is right!" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes, the large force of Hessians is coming back."

"They have learned that we tricked them."

"No doubt of it."

"I wonder how they learned it?"

"I pet me dot I vos know dot," said Carl; "dot vomans haf gone ofer und dold dem abouid us, und dey vos peen goming to mage us some more trouble."

"I shouldn't wonder if Carl had it right," said Bob.

"Likely enough, Bob; she is wideawake, sure."

"Well, the question is, What are we to do?"

Dick looked thoughtful.

"There can be no doubt but what the Hessians are coming back over to this side to hunt us up and make an attack," he said. "The only question ns, Do they know where we are?"

"I pet me fife tollar dot dey know all abouid it," said Carl; "dot vomans she vos know everyt'ings, und she haf told dem, you gan pet me dot."

"Say, Carl, you have a high opinion of that woman's abilities," smiled Bob.

"Dot is so; she is von great vomans."

"I believe that Carl has about the right idea, Bob," said Dick.

"I should not be surprised."

They talked while they watched the Hessians, and then Dick said:

"I will go down there and see if they come this way. If so, I will hasten back and we will break camp and get away; for we will not dare offer battle to such a strong force."

Then he hastened away.

He was half an hour in reaching a point near enough to the Hessians so that he could see which way they headed when they got ready to start. Then he waited.

The last company of soldiers were just coming across the stream, and when they were across the force started.

It came toward the point where Dick was hidden, and this proved that the Hessians had knowledge of the place where the Liberty Boys were encamped.

"I guess we will have to move," thought Dick.

He hastened back to the top of the bluff.

"Well?" exclaimed Bob.

"They're coming!"

"Jove! Then Carl was right. The woman must have followed us, and then she told the Hessians where we were."

"Undoubtedly."

Dick gave the order for the youths to break camp.

"We must get away from here," he said.

They were soon ready, and they set out down the slope on the opposite side from the one on which was the enemy.

The Hessians toiled up the slope slowly and carefully, for they had learned to have a great deal of respect for the prowess of the Liberty Boys.

When they got to the top and found nobody there they were disappointed, however.)

"We have been outwitted again," said Colonel Jame-son, in a voice filled with disgust; "they have gotten away from us."

"So they have," agreed Captain McDonald.

"I don't believe that we will ever run the rebels to earth."

"It begins to look that way."

"They are like so many eels. You can't get your hands on them, and if you could you couldn't hold them."

"I'm of that opinion myself—at least, unless we had three or four times their number."

"We will keep on trying, however. Perhaps we may succeed sooner or later."

"Perhaps so."

"I wonder how long they have been gone?"

"Hard to say; perhaps a good while, perhaps only a few minutes."

"I wonder if it would be worth while trying to follow them?"

"I doubt it."

"That is my idea also."

They talked awhile longer, and then the colonel ordered the soldiers to march back to the settlement.

This was done.

They arrived there an hour later and went into camp. The colonel and the captain went at once to the latter's home.

"You did not find them after all!" exclaimed Flora McDonald, in a disappointed voice.

"How do you know?" asked her husband.

"That is simple enough; there was no sound of firing."

"True; no, the Liberty Boys must have got wind of our coming and slipped away. We did not see even one of them."

"That is too bad; but I more than half expected it. Those Liberty Boys are a shrewd lot of youths, and you are going to have to get up very early in the morning in order to catch them napping."

"We will catch them sooner or later," said the colonel. At this moment the sound of firing was heard.

It sounded near at hand.

"We have been attacked!" cried the colonel, leaping to his feet and dashing toward the door.

"Those reckless, daring Liberty Boys!" cried Flora McDonald, as her husband dashed after the colonel.

CHAPTER X.

REINFORCEMENTS.

When the Liberty Boys evacuated their encampment on the top of the bluff and moved down to the road half a mile away they came upon a large force of patriot soldiers.

The force consisted of five companies and was under the command of Colonel Snell.

He was not personally acquainted with Dick, but had heard of him and the Liberty Boys, and was glad to meet them and make their acquaintance.

After greetings had been exchanged and the colonel had explained that he had been sent down there to offer battle to any redcoats or Hessians that might be in the vicinity, Dick told him that there was a chance to give the enemy battle that very day.

He explained the situation.

"I think they will go right back to the settlement," he said; "and if they do we will make another attack on them."

This suited Colonel Snell, and he said so.

"You lead the way to the Settlement, Captain Slater," he said. "We will follow you, and when the Hessians come back there and go into camp we will make an attack on them."

So they set out.

The Liberty Boys were in the lead, and as they reached a point about half way to the settlement, they paused long enough to tie their horses to trees.

Then they passed on, the patriot soldiers following.

When they were within a quarter of a mile of the edge

of the settlement they paused, and Dick went forward to reconnoiter.

The Hessians had reached the Settlement and were just going into camp.

Dick saw the colonel and the captain go to the latter's home and enter.

"Now is the time to make the attack," he told himself.

He hastened back to where he had left the Liberty Boys and their allies, and told them what he had discovered.

Then an advance was made.

They were not long in arriving at the edge of the timber, then they got ready, and at a signal from their commander they dashed forward.

The instant they got close enough they began firing, and this was what the two officers and the woman had heard.

By the time the officers reached the scene the battle was raging.

They took charge and urged their men to fight their hardest.

The officers saw at once that they were being attacked by a force almost as strong as their own, and that they would have to fight hard if they were to succeed in standing the enemy off.

The Liberty Boys were in the front ranks of the patriot force, and they fought like demons.

Their action was encouraging to the patriots, many of whom were militiamen who had never before been in battle. Had it not been for the example set them by the Liberty Boys they would doubtless have become demoralized and retreated early in the engagement. As it was, they held their ground with all the stubbornness of veterans.

Indeed, at one time the patriots seemed about to win, and the Hessians were on the point of breaking and fleeing. They would have done so but for Flora McDonald.

She had been watching the progress of the battle from her front door, and had seen that it was going against her friends. In an instant she was flying toward the scene. She forgot that she was a woman, and as such, should be a non-combatant. She forgot everything save that the king's soldiers were getting the worst of it and that she must do something to aid them—or to encourage them, at least.

"She scarcely knew what she intended to do; she acted upon impulse, and would let circumstances direct her course.

She had the two pistols in her belt, however, and she drew them as she neared the head of the troops of the king. A few moments later she was right at the front, appearing so suddenly as to give the soldiers a great surprise.

"Forward, king's soldiers! Forward, and give it to the rebels!" she cried; "drive them back! Don't let them force you to retreat!"

With this she fired both pistols.

A wild shout went up from the Hessians.

If a woman could be so brave they certainly could afford to risk their lives by standing firm.

More, they obeyed her command to move forward, and made a dash straight toward the patriot troops.

Captain McDonald, recognizing his wife, and fearing she would lose her life, ran toward where she was and tried to get her to go to the rear or back to the house, but she refused.

"I am going to stay, Allan!" she said; "the king's troops must win, and I must stay here and help them to do so."

The Hessians, encouraged, now made such a fierce onslaught on the patriot force that it was forced to give back.

The Liberty Boys fought fiercely, and called upon the others to do the same. The patriot soldiers did fight pretty well, but there was such a preponderance of militiamen among the troops that something akin to demoralization took hold upon them. In vain the Liberty Boys urged them to stand firm and drive the Hessians back. The patriot soldiers could not be encouraged sufficiently for this, and they retreated, slowly at first, and in fairly good order, but faster, presently, and faster still, and soon it became a genuine retreat.

The Liberty Boys saw it was useless to try to stand their ground longer, and so they retreated along with the rest.

When they were safe in among the trees where the enemy would not try to follow them they succeeded in getting the patriot soldiers stopped, and then they held a council.

"This is rather bad," said Colonel Snell; "they have driven us off the field."

"Yes, but we did them more damage than we did to us," said Dick. "I am confident we killed and wounded two of their number where they killed and wounded one of our men."

"Perhaps you are right."

"And we would have whipped them and driven them off the field if it had not been for Flora McDonald, Dick," said Bob. "Did you see her?"

"Yes, Bob, and I think you are right. But for her we would have beaten the enemy bad and driven it from the field."

"That woman seems to be our most dangerous enemy, old fellow."

"She is certainly a stumbling block in our way."

"Yah, she is von big sdumbling plock," said Carl Gookenspieler; "uf ve do nod loog a leedle ould she vill t'row us down, py shimmanetty."

"We will have to look out for her," agreed Dick.

"She is more dangerous to us than her husband is," said Mark Morrison.

"Yes, that is true."

Then Dick tied a handkerchief on the end of the bayonet of his musket and went back, and was met by one of the Hessian soldiers.

"We wish to remove our dead and wounded," he said.

"I will see what Colonel Jameson has to say about it," was the reply, this Hessian being one who spoke very good English.

He went to the colonel and told him what Dick had requested, and the officer himself came along with the soldier.

"Are you Captain Slater, of the Liberty Boys?" he asked, eyeing Dick with interest.

"Yes, sir; and you?"

"I am Lieutenant-Colonel Jameson. I am glad to make your acquaintance, Captain Slater. I can appreciate bravery and daring, even when the person having the attributes is an enemy."

"Thank you; I am glad to make your acquaintance, Colonel Jameson."

Then the colonel told him that he was at liberty to remove the dead and wounded.

The youth thanked him and then went back and told the patriots that the Hessian officer had granted them permission to carry away the dead and wounded patriot soldiers.

About one hundred of the patriots then went to the scene of the battle and brought away all the dead and wounded. The latter was attended to, their wounds being dressed as best could be done; and then the dead were buried.

This done, the patriot force moved away, and half an hour later was at the point where the Liberty Boys had left their horses. They untied the animals and moved along, leading them.

They continued onward, and finally went into camp on the bank of the Cape Fear river at a point where the shore was only a few feet above the water.

Here they settled down to take it easy. They did not think they would be bothered by the Hessians, for the enemy had sustained enough damage to make it want to be careful and fight shy for a little while.

Dick and Colonel Snell entered into conversation, and soon became very well acquainted. Dick took quite a liking to the patriot officer, and the liking was reciprocated.

Colonel Snell thought that he had never met a brighter, more pleasant youth than Dick.

After supper that evening Dick said he would go over across the river to the Stark home to see how Frank Felton and Tom Saunders, the two wounded youths, were getting along.

He took his departure and soon found a boat, into which he got and rowed across to the south shore.

Here he disembarked and tied the painter to a tree.

Then he made his way through the timber, and at last came to the home of the Starks.

He advanced and knocked on the door.

It was opened by Mary, who recognized him at once.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Slater," she said; "come in."

"And I am glad to see you, Miss Mary," he replied, as he entered; "and how are the wounded boys getting along?"

"Very well, indeed."

"I am glad to hear that."

Mr. and Mrs. Stark greeted Dick cordially, and then he went into the bedroom where the two wounded Liberty boys lay.

They were glad to see him, and greeted him joyously, even though weakly.

"How are you, Dick?" was their greeting. "How is everything?"

"Everything is all right, boys," was the reply. "How are you feeling?"

"Pretty good."

"I am going to be up and out in a few days."

Such were the replies, but Dick shook his head and said:

"You mustn't be in too big a hurry to get out, boys. We don't need your help particularly, and you must stay here until you are able to get around briskly."

"Say, Dick," said Frank Felton, "we heard firing a few hours ago. Did you have a fight with the Hessians?"

"Yes, Frank."

Then Dick explained about the arrival of the patriot force from the northern part of the state of North Carolina, and how they had made an attack on the Hessians and loyal militia.

When the two heard about the patriot force they were delighted.

"We will be able to get after the Hessians in good shape now, Dick," said Tom Saunders.

"So we will, Tom."

"Jove, I wish we were well enough to go back to the encampment with you, Dick," said Frank.

"You must not get impatient, Frank. Stay here until you are well and strong."

"All right; I am willing."

Dick thought of Mary, with whom he was sure Frank was in love, and smiled.

"I thought you would be," he said, significantly, and Frank blushed.

Two of the Liberty Boys had been killed in the battle with the Hessians, but Dick did not tell the wounded youths this, as he feared it would have a depressing effect on them.

He remained at the Stark home an hour or more, and then bade all good-by and took his departure.

Dick got along all right until he was within perhaps a quarter of a mile of the river, and then he was given an unpleasant surprise.

Someone leaped upon him from behind and bore him to the ground.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK A PRISONER.

Dick was taken wholly by surprise.

The person, whoever he was, had slipped up so noiselessly that the youth had no intimation of his approach.

The Liberty Boy, however, was not disposed to surrender without a fight.

He began struggling, and the tussle was a fierce one.

Dick found that his antagonist was an exceptionally strong man, however. He was, indeed, the strongest man that the youth had ever become engaged in a struggle with.

Had Dick had a fair chance he would undoubtedly have been able to hold his own, and might have even escaped. But he did not have a fair chance.

He had been leaped upon from behind, and had been borne to the ground before he could do anything to prevent it.

And now he found that, struggle as he might and exercise every ounce of his strength, as he did, he could not free himself.

In spite of his efforts to prevent it his arms were drawn together behind his back, and were tied there.

Then he was allowed to rise to his feet.

"Come," said a hoarse voice, and the youth's captor took him by the arm and led him along.

Dick could see his captor, but not plainly enough to make out his features. Indeed, he could not have told whether the man was white, red or black.

"Who are you?" asked Dick, as they walked along.

"That does not matter."

"Where are you taking me?"

"You will find out before long."

They moved onward, and half an hour later they reached the river at a point more than a mile below where the patriot encampment was.

The bluff was perhaps thirty feet high at this point, and there was a cave in the face of it. This cave was concealed by a clump of bushes.

The man who had captured Dick led the youth in behind the bushes and into the cave. It was dark as a pocket, but the fellow seemed to know the way perfectly, and presently he came to a stop, and told Dick to stand still for a few moments.

"I will strike a light," he said.

A few moments later a candle was burning, and Dick got a look at his captor.

He saw that the man was about forty years of age, and that he was not at all bad looking.

Having lighted the candle and placed it on the table, the stranger advanced and faced Dick. He stood looking at the youth for a few moments in a keen, searching manner, and then said:

"I believe that you are the kind of person I have been looking for."

"Do you think so?" was the reply.

"Yes."

"If you will tell me who you have been looking for, then I will tell you whether you are telling the truth."

"I have not been looking for any particular person."

"No?"

Dick was surprised. He did not understand what the man meant.

"No; I have some work that I wish done, and it is work that requires a cool head and a brave heart. What I meant when I said that you are the kind of person I have been looking for was, that I believed you had the cool head and the brave heart."

"Perhaps I have, and perhaps I haven't. What is the work that you wish done?"

"It is this. I wish you to go to Charleston and capture General Cornwallis and bring him here to me."

Dick was surprised, and his face expressed it.

"You wish me to go to Charleston and capture General Cornwallis?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Why do you wish to be captured by the British general?"

"I will tell you. One day a few weeks ago a party of his soldiers—British troopers, they were—came to my home, only a dozen miles from here. They robbed my house of all that was of value, and because my son, a brave boy of sixteen years, protested they shot him down in cold blood. His mother became insane as a result, and killed herself. I was away at the time, but a neighbor told me about it, and that he had given my wife and son burial. The blow almost crazed me, and I swore to have revenge, and that it should be wreaked on the head man of all, the British general himself. I came here—the troopers had burned my home—and took up my residence in this cave. Here I have plotted and planned, but have been unable to evolve a plan that promised success. I have made up my mind to get someone to help me—if willingly, well and good, but if not willingly, then to make them do it to save their own life. I happened to be near you when you were passing along to-night, and the impulse came upon me to seize you and make a prisoner of you. I did it, as you know, and now the question is, Will you assist me in this dangerous undertaking?"

Dick was amazed, even yet, after hearing the man's story. The idea of trying to capture General Cornwallis was such an impractical one that it bespoke a mind unsettled by the trouble that had come upon its owner.

The Liberty Boy was trying to think of some way of getting out of the trouble he had stumbled into. He did not believe that such a thing as the capture of the British general was possible, and he did not wish to be forced to go on any such wild goose chase, and yet he feared he would be unable to reason the man out of his idea.

He would try, however, and so he said:

"I sympathize with you, Mr.—. By the way, what is your name?"

"John Laidlow."

"As I was saying, Mr. Laidlow, I sympathize with you, and would be glad to aid you; but I do not believe that your plan is practicable at all."

Laidlow looked at Dick earnestly.

"Do you really mean that?" he asked.

"Yes; can't you see it yourself? General Cornwallis is in Charleston, surrounded by hundreds of soldiers. How could two men hope to penetrate to his headquarters, capture him, and carry him away?"

Laidlow looked thoughtful. It was evident that Dick's words had made an impression.

Then suddenly a grim, determined expression appeared upon his face.

"It must be done! It must be made to be practicable!" he cried. "General Cornwallis is morally responsible for the deaths of my wife and son, and he must be made to suffer for it. 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth' is my motto, and you must agree to help me, whether we succeed or not."

"Mr. Laidlow, I really cannot spare the time," said Dick. "I have other things to attend to."

"That doesn't matter, my young friend," was the grim reply; "as it stands now you have no choice. You are my prisoner, and must either agree to do as I ask, or you must take the consequences."

"What would the consequences be?"

"Death!"

Dick looked at the man wonderingly and doubtfully. There was no signs of anger on Laidlow's face. He spoke calmly and quietly, just as though speaking of some commonplace matter, but there was a tone of determination underlying all.

"Surely you don't mean that!" said Dick.

Laidlow nodded.

"Yes, I mean it."

Dick saw that the man had brooded over the deaths of his loved ones till his mind was unsettled in this one respect, at least, and he realized that he was in no little danger. He was determined to try to talk the man out of the notion of trying to capture General Cornwallis, and he argued with Laidlow for quite awhile, all to no avail. The man was grim and determined. Dick must promise to assist him or die.

"Let's put the discussion off till to-morrow," said the Liberty Boys, finally. "There is no hurry about starting to Charleston, you know."

"True; well, we will postpone discussing the matter until morning. There is a pallet that you may occupy. You will find it comfortable, I think."

He pointed to a place where a lot of green boughs of trees lay on the floor, covered by a blanket.

Dick threw himself down and pretended to be almost completely worn out. He was not in this condition, but he wished to deceive the man and thus throw him off his guard.

"I will make my escape before morning, or know the reason why," thought Dick.

John Laidlow placed a blanket close to the entrance to the cave and lay down there, after blowing the light out. His idea was to make it an impossibility for Dick to leave the cave without awakening him.

As Dick's arms were bound the man did not think the

youth would make any attempt to get away. Had he known Dick Slater, however, he would have known better than this.

The light had scarcely more than gone out before Dick was at work trying to free his hands.

He found this a difficult thing to do, but felt sure that he would be able to succeed sooner or later.

He tugged and strained at his bonds, and found that he was gradually getting them loosened.

"I'll be able to get one of my hands out soon," he told himself, "and then I will be all right."

He was right about this. After working perhaps half an hour longer he succeeded in getting his hands free.

"I am all right now," he told himself; "I will get away from here in a hurry. But I will have to be careful not to disturb Mr. Laidlow. Poor man! I feel sorry for him, but I can't afford to let him force me to go upon such a wild goose chase as he is figuring on undertaking."

Dick rose to his feet cautiously and moved toward the exit.

He thought he was moving carefully, but suddenly he stumbled and fell. A loose stone had been his undoing.

"What's that? Who is there?" cried Laidlow.

CHAPTER XII.

CAPTURED AGAIN.

The noise had awakened the man.

Dick was sorry for this.

He hoped to get away without trouble. He wished to slip out without disturbing Laidlow.

Now, however, he would have to engage in another struggle with the man—unless he could succeed in dodging him in the dark.

Dick hoped to be able to do this.

He did not answer the man's questions, of course, as that would have revealed his whereabouts.

Instead he rose to his feet as quickly and quietly as possible and tip-toed over toward the side of the cave. He had been careful to take a survey of the interior of the cave while the candle was burning, with the result that he knew just where to station himself.

He heard the man moving about and muttering.

"I wonder if that young fellow has succeeded in getting his hands free?" Dick heard Laidlow murmur.

Then he heard the man moving across the floor toward the table on which the candle stood.

"No; it will take too long to light the candle," the youth heard Laidlow say. "I will see if the youth has moved from where he lay."

Dick knew that he had a good chance to reach the exit, and he moved toward the point in question.

He had just reached it when he heard an exclamation from Laidlow.

"He is gone! He has escaped! I must catch him!"

Such were the exclamations given utterance to by the man, and Dick heard him coming toward the entrance to the cave.

The Liberty Boy did not hesitate or wait a moment longer.

He darted out through the opening and made his way along the shore of the river as rapidly as possible.

It was moonlight out now, although it had been dark when they entered the cave, and the man caught sight of Dick and gave utterance to a yell.

"Stop!" he cried. "Stop, or I will shoot you!"

Of course Dick did not stop.

He had been chased so often of late that he had become hardened to danger; the thought of a bullet coming zip-ping after him did not disturb him to any great extent.

He kept right on going, and was not at all surprised when he heard the sharp crack of a pistol.

Crack! Whiz-z-z-z!

Dick heard the bullet sing past his ear.

"Either he is a good shot, or that was a very close accidental shot," thought Dick.

He kept on running and felt safe now, for he did not believe Laidlow had more than one pistol.

"Even if he has, he would not be likely to come so close next time," the youth said to himself.

He ran onward, and there was no other shot; neither did the pursuer give utterance to any more threats or commands. He seemed to realize that he would be unable to catch up with the youth, and presently he gave up the chase and turned back.

Dick looked back, saw that he was no longer pursued, and then slackened his speed.

"He has given it up," the youth said to himself; "well, it was the wisest thing he could do, for he could not overtake me."

Dick made his way onward, and as he did so he was thinking of the man, and a feeling of sorrow came over him, and of sympathy for the poor fellow.

"I would pity General Cornwallis if Laidlow were to get hold of him," the youth told himself; "it would be the last of the British general."

Presently Dick arrived at a point opposite the patriot encampment, and here he found the boat just where he had left it.

He got in and rowed across.

Leaping out, he tied the painter to a tree and made his way to the encampment.

It was not very late, and only a few of the Liberty Boys had laid down.

They asked Dick what had kept him so late.

He told them, and the youths were greatly interested by the story of the man who had captured Dick, and whose wife and son had met death—the son at the hands

of the British troopers, and the wife from grief over the death of her son.

Lige Shull had listened to Dick's story in silence; but when the youths had got through making remarks about the affair he spoke up, and said:

"An' so ye run across John Laidlow, did ye, Cap'n Slater?"

"Yes," was the reply. "Did you know him?"

"I knew 'im, yes; I knew 'im well. I knowed thet he hed lost his wife an' son, an' thet he hed disappeared, but didn' hev enny idee whut hed become uv 'im."

"Well, he is living in a cave on the shore of the river about a mile and a half downstream."

"Poor feller; I think I'll go down an' see 'im."

"That isn't a bad idea. It may do him good to see someone he knows. I don't suppose that there is any danger that he will treat you in the same manner that he treated me."

"No; he knows ole Lige, an' won't try no tricks with me. Poor feller; he mus' be looney."

"His mind is certainly unsettled somewhat by the great sorrow that he was forced to undergo, but he may come around all right again. Your visit to him may result in something of the kind."

"I hope so."

Lige Shull was gone about an hour and a half, and when he returned he said:

"Laidlow wuzn't thar."

Dick was surprised.

"Wasn't he?" he exclaimed.

"No; an' I don't think he inten's comin' back, fur mos' all his things is gone."

"Where do you think he has gone?"

"Hard tellin'."

"Maype he has gone to Sharleston do dry do mage ein brisoner uf dose Sheneral Gornvallises," said Carl.

"Yis, Oi think thot is phwere yez hav' tould dhe thruth wanst in your loife, Cookyspiller," said Patsy.

"Und dot vill pe der last uf der man, you petter pe-lieve me."

"Loikely thot is dhe thruth, also; he cannot be afther capthurin' dhe British gin'ral, begorra, an' wull be capthured an' shot, Oi'm bittin'."

Next morning Dick got up a couple of hours before sunrise and made his way to the Cross Creek Settlement.

He reconnoitered the Settlement, and saw that the Hessians had taken up as strong a position as possible.

"Doubtless they are expecting another attack," thought Dick.

He was more than half disposed to make another attack, but decided to wait awhile.

He was turning away to start back to the patriot encampment when he found himself confronted by a dozen Hessians, among whom were Colonel Jameson and Captain McDonald. Flora McDonald was with them also.

The soldiers had their muskets leveled, and Dick saw that it would be suicidal to try to make his escape.

"Surrender, Captain Slater!" said Flora McDonald.

"I surrender!" was the reply.

"You are sensible," said Captain McDonald.

"I know I am powerless to help myself," was the reply.

"To try to escape now would mean death, and I am ready to die yet."

They tied his hands together behind his back and took his weapons away from him.

Then they conducted him into the home of Captain McDonald.

"We will be able to hold you a prisoner here in our home better than in the encampment proper," said the captain.

So the colonel and the captain conducted Dick into the house and to the big sitting-room, Mrs. McDonald accompanying them. The soldiers went to the encampment.

Dick was told to take a seat, and he did so.

The two officers and the woman took seats also.

"How did you know I was in the vicinity?" asked Dick.

"One of the loyalist scouts caught sight of you," replied Captain McDonald. "He came and reported, and so we took the men, made a half circuit and came upon you from the rear and captured you."

"And now, what are you going to do with me?"

"That is to be decided."

"It has already been decided," said Colonel Jameson almost fiercely, as he glared at Dick; "you are to be shot this very day!"

The Liberty Boy was looking at Mrs. McDonald as the colonel was speaking, and he thought that he detected a look of surprise and dismay on her countenance.

"She is a strong loyalist, but I don't think she wants me to be put to death," was the youth's thought.

Then to the colonel he said, aloud:

"You don't mean to say that you will have me put to death?"

"Yes! You are a spy, are you not?"

"Well, I suppose you might call me a spy."

"And the punishment usually meted out to spies when captured is death."

"I know that; but——"

"There are no 'buts' about it. You are a spy, and you have been captured in the act of spying, and we are going to put you to death."

"You have it in your power to do as you like," said Dick; "but I hope you won't be in any hurry about putting me to death. Give me at least one more day. Don't have me shot until to-morrow."

"I would advise that you do as he asks, Colonel Jameson," spoke up Flora McDonald.

The colonel looked undecided and somewhat dissatisfied. "That will give him just that much more time in which to make an attempt to escape," he said.

"We will watch him so closely that he will be unable to make his escape," said the captain, thus evidencing that

was in favor of waiting another day before putting the prisoner to death.

"I'll think about the matter, however," said the colonel. You must remember, however, that this young man has caused us a great deal of trouble recently. He has caused the deaths of a large number of the king's soldiers."

"True," agreed the captain.

They talked quite awhile, and then Dick was conducted to a bedroom, and the door was closed and fastened.

As his hands were bound, he would be unable to make any attempt to escape.

"If they don't decide to put me to death to-day, I may succeed in making my escape," he told himself.

He tested his bonds, and found that they were tied very securely.

"Oh, well, perhaps something may turn up to aid me," he thought.

CHAPTER XIII.

BOB AT WORK.

When Dick failed to return to the encampment the Liberty Boys became alarmed.

They knew he had gone to reconnoiter the Hessian encampment, and they realized that in doing so he was taking risks.

As the hours rolled away and he did not return they became more and more alarmed, and they were sure, also, that Dick had been captured.

"We must find out whether or not Dick is a prisoner," said Bob Estabrook, determinedly; "and if he is we must rescue him."

Bob thought the matter over, and then he went and had talk with Colonel Snell.

The patriot officer was sorry to hear that Dick was missing, and was willing to make another attack on the Hessians and Tories.

"I am willing to do anything and everything possible to aid your commander," he said; "I have taken a great liking to Captain Slater."

So it was decided to advance to Cross Creek Settlement and make an attack.

The order was given for the soldiers to get ready to march.

They obeyed, and an hour later the army was moving along through the timber.

Of course progress was slow.

There was no need of haste, however, as they would be able to easily reach the settlement by noon.

They made a detour, so as to approach from a different direction from which they might be expected.

They approached slowly and carefully, and at last were in sight of the encampment.

They caught sight of the sentinel, and two of the Liberty Boys stole forward and attempted to get close enough

to capture him before he could give the alarm. It was daylight, however, and he saw them, fired off his musket and gave utterance to a wild yell of warning to the soldiers in the encampment.

"The rebels!" he yelled. "The rebels are coming!"

Then he dashed toward the encampment.

Seeing there was no possible chance to take the enemy by surprise now, the patriot soldiers dashed forward at the top of their speed.

In less than half a minute the battle was raging.

The battle was a fierce one.

A number fell dead and wounded on both sides, but the patriots did the most execution.

They were better marksmen, and they were more careful when they fired, a great many stopping to take aim, even in the heat of the engagement.

The Hessians and Tories outnumbered the patriots, however, and force will tell, as a rule. The Hessians were better trained and disciplined, too, so the result was that the patriots were at last forced to retreat.

They withdrew to a safe distance, and then the wounds of those who had received injuries were dressed.

Bob then tied a handkerchief to the muzzle of his pistol and advanced to the edge of the British encampment. He was met by Captain McDonald.

"We wish to be permitted to come and remove our dead and wounded," said Bob.

"Very well, you may do so," was the reply.

"Thank you."

Then Bob looked keenly and searchingly at the captain, and said:

"Is Captain Slater a prisoner in your encampment?"

The officer nodded.

"He is," he said.

"You are not thinking of doing him any injury?"

The captain shrugged his shoulders.

"He was caught spying," was the reply, "and you know the fate that usually comes to spies when they are caught."

A hard, steely light appeared in Bob's eyes.

"Let me tell you something," he said, in a stern, grim voice; "if you harm Dick Slater I will kill you with my own hands! Do you hear? I swear it!"

The captain again shrugged his shoulders.

"I have not the say so about the matter," he said.

"Who has?"

"Colonel Jameson."

"He is the commander of the Hessian force?"

"Yes."

"Will you have him come here? I wish to see him."

"I will tell him."

The captain went back to the encampment, and a few minutes later Bob saw him returning, accompanied by another officer.

"This is Colonel Jameson," said the captain, as they paused in front of Bob.

"What do you want?" the colonel asked, somewhat curtly.

"I wish to ask what you intend doing with your prisoner, Captain Dick Slater?" replied Bob.

"He is to be shot."

This was said in a cold, determined voice.

"When is this to be done?" he asked.

"None of your business; it will come whenever I make up my mind to have it done."

"Indeed?"

Bob's tone was grim and deadly.

"Yes; and now, if there is nothing else you have to say to me I will go."

"But I have something to say to you. It is this: That if you carry out your threat and put Dick Slater to death I will never rest until I have put you to death! Do you hear? I mean it! I swear it!"

"Ha! You threaten me, do you, you insolent young scoundrel!" cried the Hessian officer; "jove, if you were not under the protection of a flag of truce I would run you through!" and he laid his hand on the hilt of his sword.

"Don't worry about that," said Bob. "If you will meet me man to man we will pretend there is no flag of truce and fight it out now and here."

That was Bob, up and down. He was always ready for a fight.

But he was not to be gratified in this instance. The Hessian officer's hand dropped from the hilt of his sword, and his lip curled in scorn.

"I am a Hessian officer," he said, with great dignity; "and you—who and what are you? A mere——"

"I'm as good as any Hessian officer that ever lived," broke in Bob; "and if you say or insinuate that I am not you are a liar!"

The officer's face flushed. He looked angry enough to draw his sword and cut Bob down, but restrained any such impulse, if he had it, and turned on his heel and walked away, with the remark:

"You are beneath my notice, so I shall pay no attention to anything you say."

"Listen to this," cried Bob. "If you harm a hair of Dick Slater's head I will kill you, if it is the last thing I do on earth! Do you hear?"

If he heard he gave no heed, for the officer walked on without looking back.

"You are rather reckless, young man," said Captain McDonald; "you are protected by the flag of truce, but even so, you must not expect that you can hide behind it and insult officers on the other side with impunity."

"I don't have any desire to hide behind the flag of truce," said Bob; "and if you say the word I'll fight you, now and here! I tell you that Dick Slater is as dear to me as a brother, and that if harm comes to him the authors of it will need to look out for themselves."

"That will do; I shall not fight you. Return to your comrades and send your men to remove your dead and wounded."

With these words the captain turned and strode away and Bob did the same.

Suddenly a thought struck Bob. Might not Dick be a prisoner in the home of Captain McDonald?

The more he thought of this the more he thought it likely that this was where Dick was.

"I wonder if I could slip around there and rescue him while the attention of the enemy is on those of our men who are removing the dead and wounded?" he asked himself.

He made up his mind that he would attempt it, at any rate.

He might fail, but then he might be successful.

He was soon at the point where the patriot force was stationed, and then he told Colonel Snell that permission to remove the dead and wounded soldiers had been granted.

"You oversee that work," he said; "I am going to try to effect the rescue of Dick Slater. I have learned that he really is a prisoner in the hands of the Hessians, and I have a suspicion that I know where he is and that I may be able to rescue him."

"I hope that you may be successful. Well, go along and good luck to you. I will attend to the work of getting the dead and wounded soldiers away from the battlefield."

"Very well."

Bob hastened away.

He made his way across through the timber until at a point directly back of the McDonald home. Then he advanced to the edge of the timber and stood there, taking a careful survey of the scene.

He could see the Hessian soldiers over at the encampment, which was near where the other four houses stood. He knew that it would be risky work venturing to try to reach the house, but he was determined to do so, risk or no risk, and so he suddenly darted forth from among the trees and ran toward the house with all his speed.

He reached the rear door and tried it cautiously.

It was not fastened, and Bob pushed it open and entered.

There was no one in the room—evidently a kitchen—when he entered, but as he turned again after closing the door he found himself face to face with Flora McDonald.

CHAPTER XIV.

ANOTHER BATTLE.

The woman was evidently greatly surprised.

She stared at Bob in open-mouthed amazement.

"Who are you?" she asked, presently.

"My name is Bob Estabrook, Mrs. McDonald," was the reply.

"What do you want here?"

"I wish to see a young man by the name of Dick Slater."

The woman started.

"Why do you think that Dick Slater is here?" she asked.

"I guessed it."

"What would you say if I were to tell you that you have not guessed correctly?"

Bob smiled.

"It would not be polite," he said; "but I am afraid that I should have to tell you that I did not believe you."

The woman smiled.

"And you would be right in doing so," she said; "I will acknowledge that Captain Slater is a prisoner in this house; but you had better go away at once. My husband and Colonel Jameson may come at any moment, and you would then be captured or killed."

"Your husband and the colonel might be killed, Mrs. McDonald. No; I am here, and I am going to rescue my friend. I hope that you will not make any attempt to prevent me from doing so, and that you will not try to warn the soldiers in the encampment that I am here."

"Very well, I promise; and I will show you where Captain Slater is confined. To tell the truth, I am not averse to seeing him set free, for Colonel Jameson seems bent on having him shot, and your friend is such a fine, brave, noble-hearted youth that I cannot bear to think of this being done. I have not forgotten that I was captured by him and that he let me go free, as a result of which I have a friendly feeling toward him."

The woman pointed to a connecting door.

"He is in that room," she said.

Bob opened the door and entered.

As he did so Dick leaped up with a glad exclamation.

"Bob!" he cried. "Old fellow, where did you come from?"

"Oh, I came out of the timber, old fellow, and I have come to set you free."

"I am glad of that. Free my arms at once."

Bob did so.

Then they went out into the sitting-room, where Mrs. McDonald was standing. She was looking toward the Hessian encampment.

As the youths entered she turned toward them and said, excitedly:

"Leave the house quickly. My husband and Colonel Jameson are coming."

"We will do so; good-by."

"Good-by."

The youths went out through the kitchen and ran with all their might toward the timber.

They kept the house between them and the two officers, and were not seen, and a few minutes later they were making their way in the direction of the point where the patriot army was.

When they reached there they found that the patriot

soldiers had just finished burying the dead and dressing the wounds of the injured.

The Liberty Boys were delighted to see Dick, and they gave him a rousing welcome.

There was sadness in their hearts, however, for two of their number had lost their lives in the battle that had just taken place.

Dick and Colonel Snell held a council, and it was decided that they would go back to the top of the bluff, by the river, and go into camp.

The order was given and the patriot soldiers marched away through the timber.

An hour and a half later they were in camp at the foot of the bluff.

They were very well satisfied with the results of the battle, on the whole.

They had inflicted more damage on the enemy than they had received.

Dick explained to the Liberty Boys how he happened to be made a prisoner.

"You will have to take me along with you hereafter, Dick," said Bob; "and while you are watching the enemy I will watch and see to it that nobody slips up and grabs you when your back is turned."

Dick laughed.

Things moved along rather quietly for a week.

The two forces seemed to be content with watching each other.

This was rather monotonous, and the Liberty Boys began to grow fidgety.

They were never satisfied unless they were up and doing.

They began figuring on getting after the Hessians once more.

Dick had not heard from Frank Felton and Tom Saunders, the two wounded Liberty Boys who had been left at the home of Mary Stark, for nearly a week, so he decided to go and see how they were getting along.

He crossed the river in the boat, made his way to the Stark home, and found that the youths were up and around. They were practically well.

"I guess we may as well go back with you, Dick," said Frank.

"Yes; we ought to get back to work, Dick," said Tom.

Dick saw a sober look appear on the face of Mary Stark.

Frank noticed it also, and he went and seated himself beside his sweetheart and began talking to her in a low voice.

"Say, Dick, can you wait an hour for me?" asked Tom.

"Yes, but what are you going to do?"

"There is a mighty nice girl living half a mile away, Dick," spoke up Frank, with a smile.

"What is her name, Frank?"

"Lucy Sutton."

"Well, run along, Tom," smiled Dick. "I'll give you an hour, freely and willingly. I know something about

this sort of thing myself. There is a little girl away up in New York state that would be glad to see me, and with whom I would like to spend an hour just about now."

Tom hastened out of the house and away in the direction of the Sutton home, while Frank and Mary left the house and went for a walk in the yard, there to talk of the things that interested them most, while Dick remained in the house and conversed with Mr. and Mrs. Stark.

At the expiration of an hour Tom Saunders arrived, and a few minutes later Frank and Mary came in, after which the three Liberty Boys bade the members of the family good-by and took their departure.

"How is everything, Dick?" asked Frank, as they walked along; "how are all the boys?"

Dick told him about the second battle, and how two of the youths had been killed.

They talked until they reached the river, and then they got into the boat and were soon on the other side.

When they arrived at the encampment Frank and Tom were given a royal welcome by their comrades, who were indeed glad to see the youths back among them, well once more and ready to fight for the great cause.

The Hessians had been struck such severe blows the times they were attacked by the Liberty Boys and the patriot force under Colonel Snell, that they were willing to take things easy and remain quietly on the spot, for awhile, at least. Now, however, at the end of a week of inactivity they were beginning to grow restless, and Colonel Jameson and Captain McDonald held a council at the captain's home.

Mrs. McDonald had told them that Dick escaped during her absence.

It was decided that reinforcements should be sent for and that then an attack should be made on the rebels.

So messengers were sent across the river to hunt up some of the parties of Hessians, British soldiers or loyalists, and get them to come over to assist the main body of Hessians.

For the next three days party after party of Hessians came to Cross Creek Settlement.

The Liberty Boys and the patriot soldiers in general knew what was going on, however.

The patriots knew that they were to be attacked sooner or later. The question with them was as to whether they should remain where they were or seek out some new location.

"I think we had better find some position where we will have access to water," said Dick, and Colonel Snell agreed with him.

So the patriot army moved to a point a mile distant from its late encampment and there went into camp.

Earthworks were thrown up, and the position was made as strong as possible. The patriots believed that they could hold the position, but in case they were unable to do so they could make their escape by entering the river and crossing it, it being fordable at this point.

Two days later the Hessians made the attack. It was a hotly contested battle, but the patriots made such a strong defense that the enemy finally gave up and retreated.

It was virtually a victory for the patriots, for the Hessians crossed the river and marched away in the direction of Charleston.

With them went Captain McDonald and his loyalist militia.

The patriot army crossed the river and went in pursuit. Finding that they could not overtake the Hessians, however, the patriots turned and marched back to the river, crossed it, and took up their position on the north shore.

Dick and Bob went to Captain McDonald's home that evening and spent an hour in friendly conversation with Flora McDonald.

She acknowledged that the Hessians and her husband and his militia had gone to Charleston, but she would not say whether they intended returning soon or not.

The Liberty Boys remained in the vicinity another week and then went with Colonel Snell and his army and joined the army being organized by General Greene.

The Liberty Boys heard news of John Laidlow before they left the vicinity of the Cross Creek Settlement. He had made his way to Charleston, had penetrated the British headquarters, and had fired a pistol shot at General Cornwallis, missing him by less than an inch. Before he could fire another shot he was himself shot dead by a British soldier.

When the Liberty Boys left that part of the country, Lige Shull remained behind. He said he could not think of leaving his old hunting grounds.

The Liberty Boys heard of Flora McDonald a number of times after they had left that section of the country, and each time it was a story of some daring deed that had been performed in the service of the king, to whom she remained loyal to the end of the war.

She and her husband returned to Scotland.

After the war closed Frank Felton and Mary Stark and Tom Saunder and Lucy Sutton were married, and both couples were very happy.

THE END.

The next number (178) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' DRUM CORPS or, FIGHTING FOR THE STARRY FLAG," by Harry Moore.

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